INSIDE:

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MAY/JUNE 2014

Slippery Slope:

First Reproductive Rights, Then Civil Rights?

Two companies seek to opt out of mandated paid coverage for women seeking contraception.

By Mike Wood

With a final decision expected sometime in June, the U. S. Supreme Court on March 25 heard oral arguments in the case of Sebelius vs. Hobby Lobby Stores & Conestoga Wood Specialities Corp. Conestoga Wood is based in East Earl, placing the local business at the crossroads of a national debate.

The two privately owned-companies named in the suit are seeking exceptions to healthcare requirements set forth in the Affordable Care Act. The ACA requires that insurance plans provided by employers include paid coverage for women seeking contraception. Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood are arguing that ACA's mandate violates rights afforded them in the First Amendment.

Will a Lancaster County company's legal challenge to providing contraceptive care eventually curtail LGBT civil rights?

The Supreme Court heard whether or not corporations can opt out of the law on religious grounds and, after 90 minutes of oral arguments, the Court seems evenly split along conservative and liberal lines. This may leave the deciding vote to Chief Justice John G. Roberts. A decision on the case is expected sometime in June.

The Oklahoma City-based Hobby Lobby chain is owned by the Green family, evangelical Christians who say they run their business on biblical principles. They operate some 600 stores in 41 states across the country with more than 15,000 full-time employees who are eligible for health insurance benefits.

The other company named in the lawsuit, Lancaster County's Conestoga Wood

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PA Insurance Carrier Applies to Offer Same-sex Family Health Plans

By Frank Pizzoli

If victory has 1,000 fathers and defeat is an orphan, then the recent Highmark experience of one local couple means that their successful resolution has many fathers, and mothers.

The resolution: After searching for health care insurance, Carl Bechdel and Dan Miller were initially refused and then granted a plan by Highmark. They are carried on the same plan which was their original intention.

Carl Bechdel and Dan Miller

Along the way to their success, many individuals inched the situation toward resolution.

"As an activist I'm finding the outcome both breathtaking and disorienting," Bechdel told *Central Voice* about Highmark's decision. Once alerted to the situation, Highmark immediately filed the necessary paperwork with the Federal government to offer same-sex family health plans in their individual marketplace offerings.

The term "individual" marketplace means that's where someone - individuals, couples, and families - look for coverage.

As far as they "gay" thing goes, Highmark has been offering same-sex coverage to private-sector employers who request such coverage for quite a few years now. "Highmark has long been a leader" in offering such coverage company representative Aaron Billger told *Central Voice*, noting that the Highmark offers its own employees such plans.

What happened?

When Miller left public-sector employment with Harrisburg City Dec. 31, 2013, Bechdel began looking for coverage. The fact

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2014 Pride Festival of Central PA July 26

This year marks the 23rd annual Pride Festival of Central PA. The event theme is: *Be Yourself! Change the World!*

Lead up events:
Sat., May 31

The 1st Annual Rainbow Run is May 31. The day begins and ends at Susquehanna Valley Harley Davidson, 6300 Allentown Blvd, Harrisburg. All bikes are welcome. Door Prizes, 50/50.

Event benefits both Pride Festival and Operation Homefront, a national nonprofit providing emergency assistance to wounded service members and their families. Registration at 10 a.m. Kickstands up at 11 a.m. Rain date June 1.

Info: 717-469-1808, 717-460-0993, andrew.w.h.campbell@gmail. com

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Exciting New HIV Gene Therapy pg 19

UMC Heading for a Schism? pg 10

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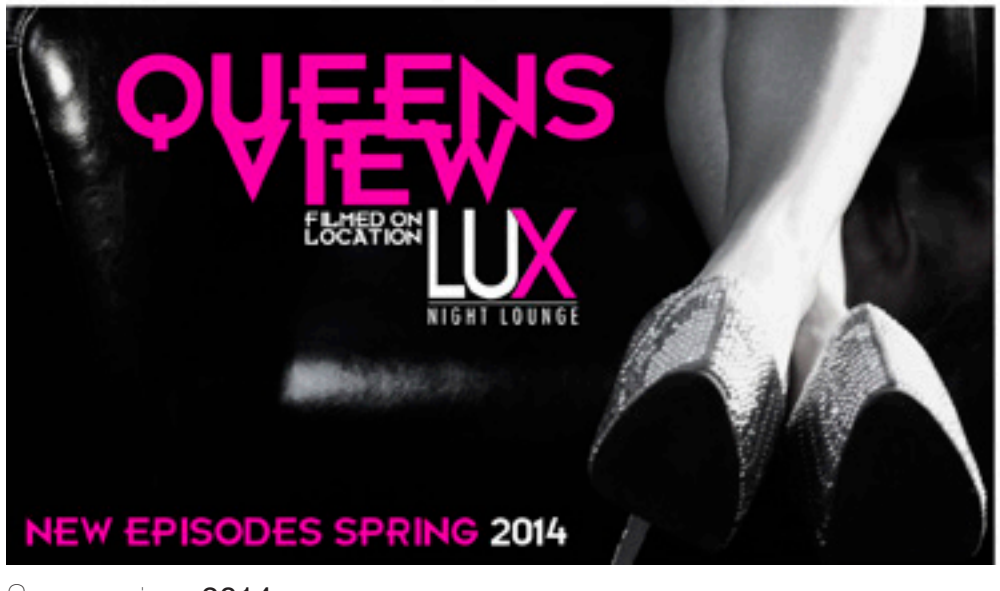
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Political Update

Harvey Milk Stamp Release in May

The United States Postal Service's will release the Harvey Milk stamp in May. Issuance of the stamp has been a decade in the making. Along the way, according to organizers of the National Harvey Milk Stamp Campaign, there was fervent opposition from some of the country's most fundamentalist religious groups, as well as from some members of the Citizens Stamp Approval Committee (CSAC), which votes to approve about 25 stamp requests out of about 1,000 requests each year.

"I know for a fact that some of the stamp committee members were absolutely opposed to the idea of a Harvey Milk stamp or a stamp honoring any homosexual leader," said San Diego City Commissioner Nicole Murray Ramirez, head of the International Imperial Court System, which led the national campaign to win approval for the stamp. "That was early on, of course. I think as the process moved on and they saw how much support we had not only from Democrats, but from top Republicans, support grew."

Downingtown Adopts Non-discrimination Ordinance

Following a one-hour discussion, Chester County's Downingtown Borough Council on March 19 adopted Pennsylvania's 33rd non-discrimination ordinance by a vote of 3-2. The new law protects against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity in employment, housing, and public accommodations. According to the ordinance, it would also create a human relations commission to "promote mutual understanding, respect and cooperation among all racial, cultural, religious, ethnic, nationality and other groups within the borough." The State of Pennsylvania does not have a similar non-discrimination law, often referred to as ENDA, an employment and non-discrimination act.

MD Passes, Gov To Sign Transgender Bill

The Maryland House of Delegates has passed the Fairness for All Marylanders Act prohibiting discrimination on the basis of gender identity in employment, housing, public accommodations and credit. Governor O'Malley has vowed to sign the bill into law. When this law takes effect, Maryland will become the 18th state, along with the District of Columbia, to protect residents and visitors against discrimination on the basis of gender identity and expression. Since 2011, Connecticut, Delaware, Hawaii, Massachusetts, and Nevada have added gender identity and expression to their state anti-discrimination laws.

VA Poll: Majority Support Gay Marriage

In a Quinnipiac University poll a majority of Virginia voters support gay marriage. The poll comes as a lawsuit to strike down the state's ban on same-sex unions is headed to federal appeals court. Some 50 percent of Virginia voters back gay marriage; 42% opposed it. Same-sex marriage is recognized in 17 states and the District of Columbia. Strongest support is from young people, with 69 percent of Virginia voters aged 18 to 29 backing gay marriage and 25 percent opposing it. Women support same-sex marriage by a margin of 54 percent to 38 percent. Men narrowly oppose gay unions, by a margin of 48 percent to 46 percent, the poll showed.

Disney Pulls Boy Scouts Funding

The Walt Disney Company has given notice to the Boy Scouts of America that it will pull all funding to the group starting in 2015 because of a BSA membership policy that bans gay leaders, the entertainment company said Friday.

Disney does not give money directly to the national organization or local BSA councils. However, through its VoluntEARS program, Disney allows employees to do volunteer work in exchange for cash donations to the charities of their choice.

Employees taking part in the VoluntEARS program will no longer be able to submit the funds to the Boy Scouts, the organization said. The new policy will not affect Walt Disney employees who volunteer with the Scouts, the company said.Though the Boy Scouts voted last year to allow gay youths to join its ranks, the group maintains a ban on gay Scout leaders.

ENDA & Exec Order: Repeatedly Redundant?

According to the Washington Blade White House Press Secretary Jay Carney said he believes passage of the Employment Non-Discrimination Act would make "redundant" a heavily sought-after executive order barring LGBT discrimination among federal contractors - an assertion that LGBT advocates say is untrue as they continue to press for both legislation and the directive.

"I think if the law passed - and I'm not a lawyer - and I haven't read every sentence of the law, but I think if a law passed that broadly banned this kind of employment discrimination, it would make redundant an executive order," Carney said. He articulated his belief that an executive order would be "redundant" in the event ENDA became law after emphasizing the broad-based protections under the bill, which applies not just to federal contractors, but to many public and private employers.

US Low in Global Index of Inclusion

The US placed 40 out of 103 countries' armed forces based on inclusion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender service members said a report by the Hague Centre for Strategic Studies issued this month.

The US armed forces in September 2011 repealed the controversial policy of Don't Ask, Don't Tell, which forced gay service members to hide their sexuality. The federal government has followed up in recent months by extending equal benefits to same-sex married couples in the military after the Defense of Marriage Act was ruled unconstitutional by the US supreme court last June. But despite these dramatic strides towards acceptance, the less widely publicized ban on the service of transgender people has pushed the US well down the league table.

"There have been big steps since don't ask, don't tell and the repeal of Doma," said Joshua Polchar, who helped produce the cener's LGBT in the armed forces index. "But the headline story is that the US continues to lag behind on the transgender issue."

Polchar added that the question of how military services around the world deal with LGBT issues was not purely a question of human rights. "This is also about military effectiveness, as an inclusive and respectful culture benefits straight people, LGBT people and the armed forces as a whole."

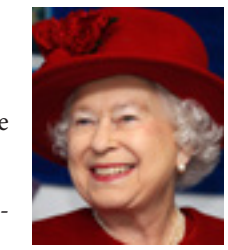
No "compelling medical reason" for Transgender Military Ban

An independent commission led by a former U.S. surgeon general and a retired rear admiral concluded in a study that the military lacks a compelling rationale for banning transgender people from military service. Completed by San Francisco State University's Palm Center, the study said outdated Department of Defense guidelines are to blame for the ban and suggested President Barack Obama could rescind the ban without approval from Congress. The ban is "an expensive, damaging and unfair barrier to health care access" for transgender troops, the commission said. The Pentagon indicated after the report was released that it has no active plans to change its transgender policy.

Senate Confirms Lesbian Nominee

The Senate voted 97-0 to confirm Judith Levy for a seat on the U.S. District Court for Michigan's Eastern District on Wednesday. Levy, who has served as assistant U.S. attorney in the district since 2000, was nominated by President Barack Obama in July. "The president welcomes the confirmation of Judith Levy," White House spokesman Shin Inouye said.

Queen Elizabeth II Approves Scottish Marriage Equality



Queen Elizabeth II officially approved Scotland's marriage equality law on Thursday, a move which will allow same-sex couples there to marry by the end of the year. Earlier in the month, the British monarch for the first time publicly acknowledged the LGBT community, issuing a congratulatory statement to the London Lesbian and Gay Switchboard on its 40th anniversary.

Young Republicans Support for Marriage Equality

The Advocate.com reports that support for marriage equality continues to be pronounced among young people, even those who identify as Republican, according to a new poll from the Pew Research Center.

The poll, conducted in February and released this week, found that 61 percent of Republican and Republican-leaning respondents aged 18-29 supported equal marriage rights for same-sex couples. Just 35 percent were opposed.

Support was markedly lower among older groups of Republicans, at 43 percent in favor among those aged 30-49, 30 percent among those aged 50-64, and 22 percent among those 65 and older. Support averaged out to 39 percent among all age groups.

MD lawmaker: Trans Bill Normalizes 'abnormal behavior'

A Frederick County Republican has told her constituents that House Bill 1265 banning discrimination against transgender Marylanders would "normalize abnormal behavior."

"I am completely and unequivocally opposed to this bill, which doesn't aim to end discrimination, but to normalize abnormal behavior," wrote state Del. Kathy Afzali (R-Frederick County) in a letter to her constituents.

"HB 1265 seeks to create a new class of protected individuals in the state's anti-discrimination statute," said Afzali. "Specifically, the bill defines 'gender identity' as 'appearance, expression, or behavior of an individual regardless of the individual's assigned sex at birth.'"

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‘Particle Fever’ Inspires Action

By Frank Pizzoli

“Particle Fever” is a gripping documentary about the most exacting and expensive scientific experiment ever conducted, and one that may be among the most significant.

The film charts a 2012 milestone in the decades-long search by physicists to find an elementary particle called the Higgs boson. If the discovery is confirmed, it brings them a large step closer to understanding the universe at its most fundamental level.

Over a period of 20 years, 10,000 scientists from 20 nations often at odds with each other collectively worked on solving one of modern physics’ ongoing problems. The movie made the science easy to grasp as narrators described the grand experiment that took place at the CERN lab in Switzerland.

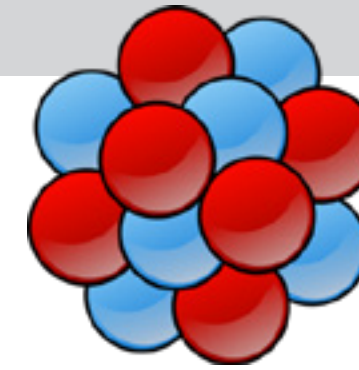
The scientists show us that humans can come together to solve problems for the good of the general order. We don’t have to be at odds with each other every step of the way.

Expressions on the face of viewers were a delight to see. The smiling, pleasantly amazed look said: This movie restored my faith in humanity.

Why?

That’s easy. The film shows us firsthand what humans can do when they put aside differences and focus on solving a problem. My first post-movie thought was about hunger. The scientist’s example proves we can, if we wanted to, feed the planet’s hungry people. There are no excuses for allowing hunger to continue. There are only man-made barriers. We accept the barriers - food is a tightly controlled commodity - until we’re hungry. Then we somehow miraculously “get it”.

We could, if enough of us came together over common interests rather than divisive identity politics held over from the 20th Century, stop war. Just like split atoms lead to an atomic bomb, splintered humanity sets into motion as much destruction.



Imagine what other perplexing problems humans might solve if we just knocked off the BS and put our minds together? But with any never ending problem, solutions often mean someone or some organization or business group loses power. And therein lies the barrier. Take our dependence on oil, ours or foreign. Could we not be dependent on oil, ours or others, if we wanted to be? Of course, but we think you get our drift.

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TO SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND Religion

Booze Monopoly Bad for Business

By Bob Dick
Commonwealth Foundation

Whether he's pouring drinks or excavating ruins beneath his historical tavern in Bucks County, Frank Lyons loves his customers and his community. This winter, a snow storm knocked the power out at the Continental Tavern, but Frank used a generator to keep his doors open and his customers in good spirits.

The crowded tavern became so busy that Frank needed to restock, but when he went to the closest government-run liquor store, he found it closed.

Frank could have traveled a mere six minutes to New Jersey to pick up a few bottles, but it is illegal to purchase alcohol out of state and bring it back to Pennsylvania. Frank decided to make do with what he had, even though the decision could have hurt his business.

Pennsylvania's liquor system is stuck in the Prohibition Era, penalizing business owners like Frank. These outdated, harmful restrictions stand in the way of business owners serving their customers.

Recent revelations that the state officials regulating Frank's business violated their own ethical codes add insult to Frank's injury. Corruption at the highest levels of the PLCB bolsters the already overwhelming case for getting government out of the booze business.

According to the state Ethics Commission, three former liquor officials violated ethics laws by accepting gifts from PLCB vendors. They failed to disclose those gifts and even used employment at the PLCB for their personal benefit. In one case, James Short, the former director of marketing, was reimbursed by taxpayers to play in a golf outing unrelated to his work.

Unfortunately, this type of corruption is a symptom of a much larger problem: The government's complete control of the sale and distribution of wine and spirits in Pennsylvania. If government bureaucrats did not have the sole authority to determine what alcohol is sold in all the state's liquor stores, businesses would have no incentive to bribe them with golf outings, fancy dinners, and free liquor.

The PLCB's abuse of power isn't the only problem. The agency fails to serve consumers and entrepreneurs effectively.

Forty-five percent of residents in Philadelphia and the surrounding counties say they purchase alcohol in other states. This border bleed costs Pennsylvania millions in lost sales and lost tax revenue. With so many residents illegally crossing state lines to buy wine and spirits, shouldn't PLCB officials realize they are not meeting consumers' needs?

Voters in the state of Washington recently realized the flaws of a government liquor monopoly. After the state privatized its liquor stores, it realized an increase in sales and saw a net increase in employment.

This experience follows a historical pattern. Alberta, Canada privatized its liquor system decades ago. Since then, the province has seen an increase in liquor retail employment according to Mark Milke of the Fraiser Institute.

More jobs wouldn't be the only benefit. Right now, Pennsylvania has approximately 600 state stores serving 12.7 million people. As entrepreneurs like Frank Lyons can attest, consumers aren't the only group underserved by the PLCB.

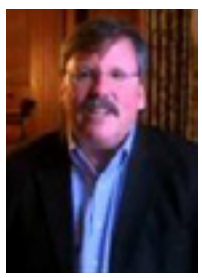
Frank would welcome the chance to patronize a liquor store that stays open when he needs it most. Or even one that offers delivery directly to his tavern. As it stands, his choices are limited to a monopoly whose stores are closed on eleven state holidays.

Two years ago, Frank found a cache of bottles in a hidden chamber under his more than 200-year-old tavern. They were likely stashed there in the Prohibition Era–back when following the law meant having no choice at all.

Today, lawmakers have the chance to finally complete the rollback of Prohibition and end the cycle of corruption at the PLCB by giving Pennsylvanians what they overwhelming support: The freedom to choose!

Bob Dick is a policy analyst for the Commonwealth Foundation (CommonwealthFoundation.org), Pennsylvania's free market think tank.

Environmental Council Names CEO


Woodwell

The Pennsylvania Environmental Council (PEC), the leading statewide environmental organization, has named Davitt B. Woodwell to the position of president and chief executive officer, succeeding Paul M. King, who is retiring.

Woodwell also becomes a member of PEC's board of directors. The transition is effective July 1.

Woodwell assumes his statewide duties after twelve years as the vice president of its Western Pennsylvania office in Pittsburgh. He began his career as a staff attorney at PEC in 1993 and served in several positions during his tenure at PEC. He took a leave of absence from PEC during 2000 and 2001 to serve as the first executive director of the Riverlife Task Force which developed a master plan for Pittsburgh's waterfronts and proposed the creation of the new "Three Rivers Park." Prior to joining PEC, he was dean of students at Kildonan School in Amenia, New York.

A graduate of both the University of Pittsburgh and its School of Law, Mr. Woodwell is a member of the DCNR Natural Gas Advisory Committee, the DCNR Ecosystem Management Advisory Committee and the Center for Sustainable Shale Development Standards and Evaluation Committee. He also serves on the board of directors of Aspinwall Riverfront Park and the Steel City Rowing Club.

He is past chairman of the Citizen Advisory Panel to the Southwestern Pennsylvania Regional Planning Commission and was a member of the boards of directors of the Allegheny Land Trust, the MetEd/Penelec Sustainable Energy Fund, the Audubon Society of Western Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh Parks Conservancy, the Regional Trails Corporation, the Steel Industry Heritage Corporation, and Friends of the Riverfront.

Woodwell also served as a member of the University of Pittsburgh Institute of Politics Shale Gas Roundtable and the Allegheny County Air Pollution Control Advisory Committee. He also participated in the Department of Environmental Protection's regulatory negotiation on the special protection waters program. Additionally, he served on the Pittsburgh Ozone Stakeholder Working Group and its subsequent negotiations on regulating air pollution and was appointed by Governor Tom Ridge to serve on the Governor's Commission on Greenways. He has been an adjunct professor of environmental law at the University of Pittsburgh School of Law and is a frequent speaker at environmental forums and conferences.

"Davitt Woodwell is one of the most progressive environmental advocates in Pennsylvania," said PEC board chairman Tony Bartolomeo. "His track record as a champion of the environment, a convener of diverse positions on a wide range of issues, and problem-solver on some of the most difficult environmental challenges facing Pennsylvania make him the right person to lead our organization.

"The future of PEC is being defined by new technologies, a constantly-changing political and regulatory landscape and unprecedented financial challenges that require a unique brand of leadership. We're confident that Davitt embodies the qualities and skills that will ensure that PEC remains the leading force in environmental advocacy in Pennsylvania for many years to come."

Woodwell resides with his wife and two children in Indiana Township, Pennsylvania.

voice box

CHRISTIAN PERSECUTION?

I am sending this letter in reference the column by Alvin McEwen *(March-April 2014)* . I do not see where the Christians are persecuted because of one's stance on their lifestyle. Nevertheless, the church has the right to decline from performing same sex marriage. Inasmuch as the church is intolerant of this life style the LGBT is intolerant of the church being intolerant. When one disagrees with this life style they are often called homophobic. I say marry whomsoever you so choose.

From colmanelliott972@gmail.com

PHELPS COMMENTS

God will deal with this man, I don't have to. Hate is not what Jesus taught us to do. I'm not here to judge anyone although he judged everyone as more or less, worthless garbage who was homosexual. I don't hate anyone, I just feel it very unkind of any church to act in the manner they do. I look at how the servicemen and police shot innocent people at Kent State College but where was everyone at when this type of thing was going on? I'm sorry, this was wrong.

- Reader response to the death of anti-gay preacher Fred Phelps

FRED'S FUNERAL

The LGBTQ community should model the love which they wish others would show them. No one should protest Fred's funeral. Be an example to the world of what God's love really means.

- Reader response to the death of anti-gay preacher Fred Phelps

E-mail your thoughts to Central VOICE posops@aol.com

Not Alone on Gay *and* Progressive

By Frank Pizzoli

From the chatter, our story "Gay *and* Progressive" struck nerves all along the political spectrum.

Here's the shorthand: Old "market myths" used to describe the LGBT community have crumbled. We're *not* all rich with unlimited disposable income.

For example, labels like DINK, double income no kids, although applicable to some were never applicable to all. Yet an entire cottage industry of marketing to gays and lesbians fruitfully developed. There was no recognition of transgender or bisexual individuals in those early heady years. Like many market campaigns, they had little to do with reality. Market campaigns exist to evoke not enlighten.

As national organizations and their state entities have turned budgets to marriage equality and military issues - important issues but not to everyone - others within the LGBT community are asking about issues of economic justice. Their rationale is that economic issues affect more LGBT people than marriage and military service.

There is also a growing feeling that acceptance into the military may quiet our activist community. Would newly-inducted queer soldiers ask about the legitimacy of a foreign invasion? Or would they feel compelled to dial it down now that they have a place at the table?

We're not taking sides. We're asking questions. That's what newspapers do. We're not a cheerleading squad for the LGBT community. We write stories. We also invite readers and others to write for us. We ask that you read our stories and then make up your own mind. From the chatter, you've been reading our stories.

At press time, stalwart gadly Michael Petrelis, a *Central Voice* correspondent, had sent three communications to HRC leaders with questions on "economic justice issues" as his email indicated. All requests went unanswered.

Petrelis asked:

1. Food stamps have been cut by Congress and the impact is being felt among low incomes LGBT people across the country. What actions did HRC take opposing the cuts and what advice do you give to people suffering a further shedding of their food security? Have you issued a statement about the cuts?

2. HRC maintains an action center and store in the Castro, a store from which Harvey Milk was evicted because of gentrification, and vacuums up many local LGBT dollars thanks to a large membership here, yet I'm not aware of HRC taking a position on the epidemic of eviction faced by longtime gays with AIDS in the Castro or other losing their homes. Are you doing anything locally about this housing crisis so many of us are dealing with?

3. Thousands of LGBT people struggle to survive making only a minimum wage. Is HRC organizing in any significant way to raise the minimum wage?

4. You're probably aware of protests on Thursday (Dec. 5, 2013) at fast food restaurants on behalf of workers, some of whom are LGBT citizens and our allies, demanding the industry pay its workers a living wage and provide expanded benefits. Will HRC be present at any of the protest or supporting the goals of the organizers?

5. Given the economic hardships and access to healthcare myself and other LGBT folks in San Francisco are grappling with to stay alive, keep a roof over our heads and earn a decent income, what is HRC doing to address our concerns about lack of affordable housing, higher wages and uninterrupted health services delivery?

Tell us what you think at *posops@aol.com*.

PennDOT, DEP Seeks Volunteers

PennDOT and the Department of Environmental Protection (DEP) are seeking volunteers for this year's Great American Cleanup of Pennsylvania effort that runs through May 31.

The statewide cleanup is an annual effort sponsored by PennDOT, DEP, Keep Pennsylvania Beautiful and other partners through which interested individuals and groups can create cleanup events.

Groups involved in PennDOT's Adopt-A-Highway (AAH) program, which involves volunteers cleaning roadsides year round, are also encouraged to participate in the cleanup.

"These cleanup programs play a huge role in keeping Pennsylvania beautiful through cleaner roadsides and communities," said PennDOT Secretary Barry J. Schoch. "It's my hope that more individuals get involved and join the thousands of dedicated volunteers who participate in these efforts year after year."

In addition to the statewide cleanup, registered events have access to free disposal at participating landfills during "Pick it Up PA Days" from April 12 to May 5.

PennDOT provides gloves, trash bags and safety vests to AAH and Great American Cleanup of PA groups with funding from DEP's Solid Waste Abatement Fund.

"DEP works every day to provide for the health and safety of Pennsylvanians through a cleaner environment," DEP Secretary Chris Abruzzo said. "The Great American Cleanup of Pennsylvania is a great opportunity for volunteers across the state to join us in that effort."

During last year's Great American Cleanup, 6.1 million pounds of litter was collected from Pennsylvania's roads, trails and shorelines by more than 137,000 volunteers.

PennDOT's AAH program contributed more than 72,000 volunteers who cleaned up more than 65 percent of the collected litter on 10,859 miles of cleaned up roadway.

Through the AAH program, volunteers collect litter on a two-mile section of state highway four times a year. The program currently has nearly 7,000 participating groups, more than 117,000 volunteers and 15,140 miles of adopted state-maintained roadways.

Interested individuals can find a listing of cleanup events, resources for organizing a cleanup and other information about the effort online at www.gacofpa.org.

Groups interested in adopting a section of highway are encouraged to contact their local PennDOT County Maintenance office and ask for the AAH coordinator, or visit www.dot.state.pa.us.

Change.org Drops Progressive Litmus Test

According to internal documents, Change.org, the online social movement company founded on progressive values, has decided to change its advertising policy to allow for corporate advertising, Republican Party solicitations, astroturf campaigns, anti-abortion or anti-union ads and other controversial sponsorships, according to internal company documents.

Change.org allows users to launch and sign petitions, and the company has had some high-profile successes. Change.org currently operates under a values-based client policy, only accepting advertisements from progressive organizations that share its values. The new policy will be closer to "a Google-like open advertising policy in which determinations about which advertisements we'll accept are based on the content of the ad, not the group doing the advertising," according to a company FAQ sent to staff. The document was leaked to Jeff Bryant, an associate fellow at the Campaign for America's Future, a liberal organization, who subsequently provided it and others to The Huffington Post.

The company will implement the shift on Oct. 24, according to the memo.

"Change.org built its reputation on arming Davids to take on the Goliaths of the world," Bryant told HuffPost. "Now it seems that the company thinks David and Goliath should be on the same team."

Change.org did not plan to reach out to its base of progressive users about the change. "[W]e have no plans to proactively tell users about the new design or our new mission, vision, or advertising guidelines," reads one document.

The press was to be kept similarly in the dark. "We are not planning proactive press outreach on the rebrand but are queuing up positive press profiles to launch around Oct. 22," reads the FAQ in the document, urging staff to keep things confidential and referring to the initial launch date, which has since been postponed.

The current Change.org policy limits sponsored campaigns to progressive organizations. "We accept sponsored campaigns from organizations fighting for the public good and the common values we hold dear -- fairness, equality, and justice," reads the site's soon-to-be replaced policy. "We do not accept sponsored campaigns from organizations that consistently violate these values, support discriminatory policies, or seek private corporate benefit that undermines the common good."

After the shift, Change.org's new policy will specifically allow campaigns that its liberally minded site users might find objectionable. "What about anti-abortion, pro-gun and union-busting advertising?" reads the FAQ in the leaked document.

"We are open to organizations that represent all points of view, including those with which we personally (and strongly) disagree," reads the answer.

Benjamin Joffe-Walt, director of communications for Change.org, acknowledged that the changes as outlined in the internal documents will be implemented. Joffe-Walt said the company never intended to pitch itself as strictly progressive.

"It's not what we ever claimed to be," he said.

Joffe-Walt said a new, general guide for the new company policy would be: "If Google will allow it, we would allow it."

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Local Activist Reflects on Phelps Family

Nate Phelps, estranged son of Fred Phelps, Sr.

By Frank Pizzoli

When Westboro Baptist Church founder Fred Phelps, 84, died March 19, the LGBT community vacillated between "Ding dong the witch is dead" and more reflective reactions to his death.

One reader wrote: God will deal with this man, I don't have to. Hate is not what Jesus taught us to do. I'm not here to judge anyone although he (Phelps) judged everyone as more or less, worthless garbage who was homosexual. I don't hate anyone, I just feel it very unkind of any church to act in the manner they do. I look at how the service men and police shot innocent people at Kent State College but where was everyone at when this type of thing was going on? I'm sorry, this was wrong.

Another reader wrote: The LGBTQ community should model the love which they wish others would show them. No one should protest Fred's funeral. Be an example to the world of what God's love really means.

Central Voice talked with Alanna Berger, co-founder of The Silent Witness organization, about her and husband Blaise's conversations of several years ago with Fred Phelps' son Nate Phelps. The organization is now known as Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance, after a like-minded group joined forces.

"We started talking to Nate four years ago when we had our first Silent Witness Peacekeepers conference," Berger said. Known for their signature rainbow umbrellas, Silent Witness Peacekeepers Alliance (SWPA) is an organization of gay and straight allies dedicated to providing a non-confrontational buffer between the LGBT (lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender) community and those who would protest LGBT events.

The organization's web site explains that the group members "are peacekeepers, not counter-protesters, protecting everyone's right of free speech." Traditionally, they provide visual protection from "street preachers" and protesters at events such as LGBT Pride festivals and other events.

Estranged from his father and the clan that forms the nucleus of the church, the organization wanted to have him speak. The group couldn't afford him then, but kept trying to find a way to bring him here. "Blaise was finally able to get him at Millersville University for an MU Allies' event" a couple of years ago.

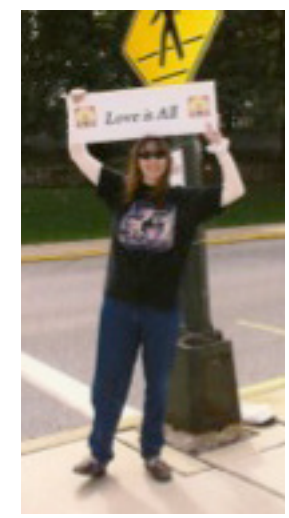
"He believes his family should be ignored. They thrive on attention," Berger told *Central Voice*. Fred Phelps, his son told her, has been mentally ill for decades, and his family has suffered for it.

She believes that love and compassion have swayed many of his grandchildren to leave the cult. "The count is somewhere around 15-16 at this point," Berger said.

Immediately after his father's death, Nate Phelps released this statement:

"Fred Phelps is now the past. The present and the future are for the living. Unfortunately, Fred's ideas have not died with him, but live on, not just among the members of Westboro Baptist Church, but among the many communities and small minds that refuse to recognize the equality and humanity of our brothers and sisters on this small planet we share. I will mourn his passing, not for the man he was, but for the man he could have been. I deeply mourn the grief and pain felt by my family members denied their right to visit him in his final days. They deserved the right to finally have closure to decades of rejection, and that was stolen from them.

"Even more, I mourn the ongoing injustices against the LGBT community, the unfortunate target of his 23 year campaign of hate. His life impacted many outside the walls of the WBC compound, uniting us across all spectrums of orientation and belief as we realized our strength lies in our commonalities, and not our >



Alanna Berger, Silent witness co-founder at the 2003 Phelps family protest in Harrisburg.

Westboro Baptist Church members in 2003 protesting in Harrisburg.

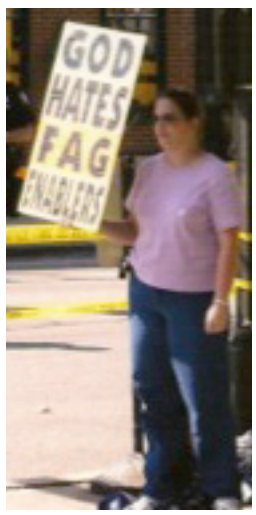
differences. How many times have communities risen up together in a united wall against the harassment of my family? Differences have been set aside for that cause, tremendous and loving joint efforts mobilized within hours… and because of that, I ask this of everyone — let his death mean something. Let every mention of his name and of his church be a constant reminder of the tremendous good we are all capable of doing in our communities.

"The lessons of my father were not unique to him, nor will this be the last we hear of his words, which are echoed from pulpits as close as other churches in Topeka, Kansas, where WBC headquarters remain, and as far away as Uganda. Let's end the support of hateful and divisive teachings describing the LGBT community as 'less than,' 'sinful,' or 'abnormal.' Embrace the LGBT community as our equals, our true brothers and sisters, by promoting equal rights for everyone, without exception. My father was a man of action, and I implore us all to embrace that small portion of his faulty legacy by doing the same."

Local Phelps

In 2004, Phelps family members, including children, protested the public screening of "Jim in Bold," a film about a troubled young man from the south central Pennsylvania region who committed suicide. Several hundred LGBT people and their allies formed a safety ring around the Pennsylvania State Museum where the film was shown.

In 2006, U.S. Marine Lance Corporal Matthew A. Snyder was killed in a non-combat-related vehicle accident in Iraq.



Westboro Baptist Church members in 2003 protesting screening of film.

On March 10, Westboro Baptist Church picketed Snyder's funeral in Westminster, Maryland, as it had done at thousands of other funerals throughout the US in protest of what they considered America's increasing tolerance of homosexuality.

Family affair

The private relationships of the Phelps family were as controversial as their public profile.

Westboro Baptist Church founder Rev. Fred Phelps, Sr.

Church elders eventually excommunicated Phelps after a power struggle in which Shirley Phelps-Roper lost a battle with male elders for control.

The Topeka Capital-Journal reported that Fred Phelps Sr. was excommunicated from the church after advocating a kinder approach between church members. The excommunication occurred after the formation of a board of male elders in the church. The board had defeated Shirley Phelps-Roper, the church's longtime spokesperson, in a power struggle, and Fred Phelps Sr. called for kinder treatment of fellow church members. The board then ejected Phelps Sr. The power struggle and excommunication was revealed by Nate Phelps, who broke away from the church 37 years ago.

Nate Phelps said he observed that Shirley Phelps-Roper had fallen from grace and wasn't as visible in the church as she had been while Drain and Tim Phelps had become more visible. In recent months, calls made to Shirley Phelps-Roper have been answered by Drain. Some observers have speculated that with the takeover by male members of the family, there may be a "tell all" book published down the road.

The elder's decision had a big impact on Phelps Sr., Nate Phelps said.

"They took the one thing that meant everything to the man," Nate Phelps said, referring to Phelps Sr.'s tie to the church. "That old man and his reason to exist have gone away."

Right before his death, church representative Steve Drain refused to talk about the excommunication of Fred Phelps Sr. "We don't discuss our internal church dealings with anybody," he said.

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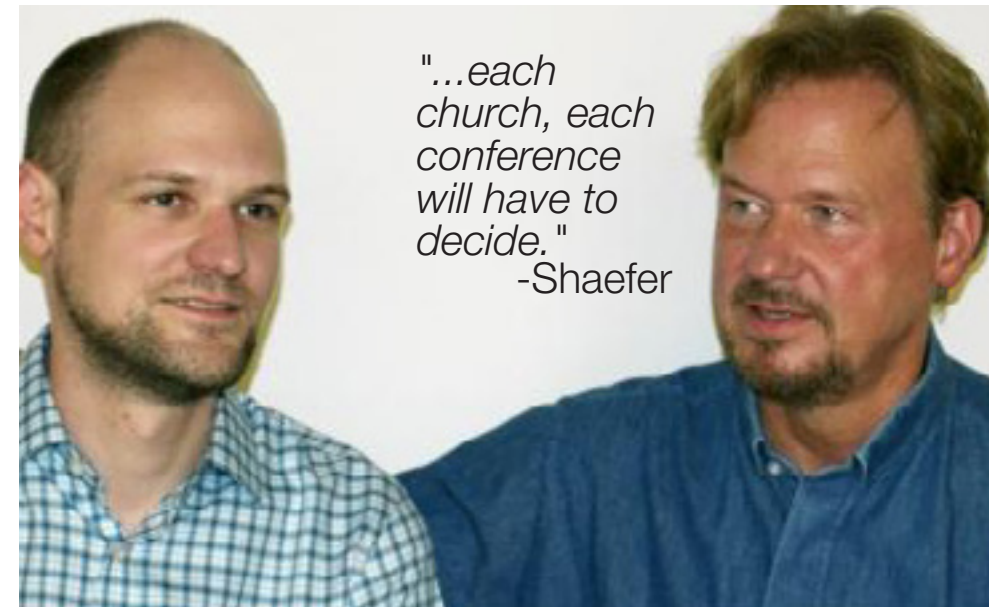


Rev. Frank Schaefer, Lebanon, who performed a same-sex wedding for his son in 2007 and was defrocked in 2013 for his actions.

United Methodist Church and No More Trials; Schism Ahead?

By Central Voice

Central Voice talked with defrocked pastor Frank Schaefer, Lebanon, on a decision by an upstate New York United Methodist Church conference to stop church prosecutions of pastors within their conference who perform same-sex weddings.

March 10, United Methodist Bishop Martin McLee and Rev. Thomas Ogletree announced that the church was dropping the case against Ogletree for officiating at his son's wedding. There is a movement within the UMC to organizing its marriage ministry to all couples on an equal basis in open defiance of church law.

Bishop McLee said, "I call for and commit to cessation of trials," the first time ever a sitting UM bishop has categorically declared he will not prosecute pastors for ministering to LGBTQ people.

"I am grateful that Bishop McLee has withdrawn this case and the church is no longer prosecuting me for an act of pastoral faithfulness and fatherly love," Ogletree said. "But I am even more grateful that he is vowing not to prosecute others who have been likewise faithful in ministry to LGBTQ people. May our bishop's commitment to cease such prosecutions be the beginning of the end of the United Methodist Church's misguided era of discriminating against LGBTQ people."

The case against Rev. Thomas Ogletree (top) for officiating his son's wedding has been withdrawn by New York UMC.

Rev. Thomas Ogletree was scheduled to be tried March 10 after officiating his son's same-sex wedding.

The new announcement means that these kinds of trials will no longer occur *only* within the upstate New York conference. The UMC is governed by many conferences, each of which participates in the larger governance structure of the international church.

"This decision, to end trials, effects only the upstate New York conference, nowhere else," Schaefer confirmed for *Central Voice.* He is still defrocked within his own conference.

The entire UMC meets every four years, next in 2014. Schaefer says there is a real possibility that the church will experience a schism over same-sex marriage.

"We are deeply divided on same-sex marriage," Schaefer says. "There's lots of turmoil but perhaps this will bring change, but maybe not," he reflects. "I expect this division could lead to a schism within the church when we next meet in 2016. If by then the rules stay the same - no same-sex marriage - then each church, each conference will have to decide. That may lead to a split," he says.

Local LGBT-friendly Mental Health Care

By Central Voice

The doctor is in.

LGBT-friendly mental health services are available through Alder Health Services. Psychiatrist Susan Thornsley, MD, and a two-member mental health team, Liz Leen and Kali Thompson, offers LGBT-friendly mental health services in Lancaster and Harrisburg.

"I'm familiar with the region," Thornsley tells *Central Voice*. She was born and raised in the area.

Thornsley

In addition to her own private medical practice, Thornsely has had many affiliations with the region's medical and human service organizations, including Hershey Medical Center, children and youth agencies, Pennsylvania Department of Public Welfare, Herbert Schaffner Youth Center, New Passages, Harrisburg Institute of Psychiatry, Loysville Youth Development center, and others.

"Early in my career I helped a transgender individual who had difficulty finding services," Thornsely says. Her approach is culturally sensitive to LGBT issues and she is "aware people have had bad experiences" in searching for services.

"We take you as you are. No judgments," Thornsley explains. "We look together at how you came to be who you are today and what works, what doesn't work," she says.

In Thornsley's treatment world, patients are in charge of the experience. "They may need medication, talking therapy, or both. If they need to have talking therapy, they are assigned to a member of the Masters of Social Work mental health staff," Thornsley says.

Individuals requesting services are not required to have insurance coverage. There is also a sliding scale program called The Alder Leaf Program for individuals without insurance. A discount is based upon the patient's household income. Payment plans are also available if discussed in advance of an appointment.

For mental health services, Alder Health currently accepts Aetna (all plans), Capital Blue Cross (all plans), Coventry, Health America/Health Assurance, Highmark (all plans, psychiatric services only), Keystone Health Plan (psychiatric services only), and Medicare (psychiatric services only).

Long-standing commitment

How did Alder Health's commitment to the region's LGBT population develop?

As far back as 2010 the agency's governing board began focusing on underserved populations. That year the agency adopted its current mission statement expanding the organization's scope of service from HIV/AIDS support and prevention programming to include efforts to meet the health and wellness needs of populations who have traditionally been marginalized by the healthcare system. The LGBT community was identified as one of those underserved populations. In virtually every formal and informal survey of LGBT needs completed within the region in recent years, LGBT-friendly medical services was always high on the list. "We're meeting an expressed need," Phil Goropoulos said.

The mental health community was also identified as an underserved population thus reflecting Dr. Thornsley's work which includes, but is not limited to, the gay community.

The emphasis on underserved populations reflects radical shifts in health care delivery systems as they evolve into the 21st century. The current buzz word is "integration" of services, no more medical silos for disease specific and demographic specific populations. Alder Health's coordination of medical and mental health services reflects the current policy and funding environment.

"We're meeting an expressed need in a way that matches up with the changing health care environment," Goropoulos said. "We have not abandoned the LGBT or the HIV community with these changes. On the contrary, because we've made these changes we will be here in the future to provide services to both communities," Goropoulos said.

For an appointment or information, please call 1.800.867.1550.

Ally in the Academy

By Trum Simmons

Walt Whitman's Walking Dead

Earlier this spring The New York Times Magazine ran a cover story about new research on bisexuality. The title was long: "The scientific quest to prove—once and for all—that someone (even a man) can be truly attracted to both a man and a woman."

Author Benoit Denizet-Lewis early on quotes Ian Lawrence, a board member of the American Institute of Bisexuality, who said, "It's exhausting trying to keep up with all the ignorance that people spew about bisexuality," and the story spends a good deal of time on that ignorance.

I began teaching my course Introduction to Lesbian and Gay Studies in 2000, and the text we used had a couple of excellent scholarly articles on bisexuality, both of which outlined the problems of bisexual people being accepted and validated by the rest of us.

In saying the rest of us I mean that not only heterosexual people tend to misunderstand bisexuality, but lesbians and gays as well. You know what the issues are: self-identified bisexuals can't make up their minds; they are going through a phase ; bisexual men are really gay men finding their way.

So in 2000 my class was reading essays from the early 90s that discussed biphobia and bi erasure, two terms that featured prominently in the 2014 Times piece. Bisexual people today often feel marginalized or invisible by the rest of us, and there are researchers seeking to prove that there is a scientific basis for bisexuality in order to validate it.

I've got to say that I'm not a big fan of scientific research trying to validate the LGBTQ communities in our culture. I understand the impulse, and I'm not against the research, but I think there is an easier and more productive way to get a handle on the fluidity and variety of human sexual experience.

Faithful readers of this column (I hear there are some) will not be surprised to find that this brings me back to Walt Whitman and his concept of the walking dead. Well, I haven't put it quite that way in the past, but you know the quote from "Song of Myself."

"Whoever walks a furlong without sympathy walks to his funeral drest in his shroud."

This line follows his lengthy lists of Americans from all walks of life, fellow human beings Whitman embraces no matter what their ethnic background, gender, sexual orientation or worldly condition. Whitman says we must love one another, period, and that the way to do this is by empathizing with those different from us.

When we truly understand another person we will inevitably affirm him or her as our brother or sister, no matter how far from societal norms they may be, no matter how different from us.

Why do we have such trouble with this concept of every human being as equal to every other human being? Why is this especially true when it comes to human sexuality?

I have a few thoughts about this.

I think it's about our difficulty dealing with the ambiguity and mystery in life. If you haven't noticed already, science will not solve all our mysteries, and certainly not all our problems. Just ask any true scientist, who invariably notes that the more we discover the more we find there is to know.

Scott Peck, author of the famous best-seller The Road Less Traveled, spoke to our problems with mystery in a later book, Further Along The Road Less Traveled. Defining mental health as a process of ongoing dedication to reality at all costs, Peck says we must face the reality that there is simply a whole lot of stuff we just don't know, along with much we will never know.

In our pursuit of mental and emotional health we need to come to a sort of mystical/communal stage, in which we see a kind of cohesion beneath the surface of things. Seeing these connections, mystics through the ages have spoken about unity and community among all peoples of the earth.

Which is of course just what Walt Whitman wrote about throughout his life as he revised, over and over, his marvelous book of poetry Leaves of Grass. The mystical experience he describes in "Song of Myself" is what brings him to affirm all life on earth, especially the life of every single human being.

Back to scientific research on bisexuality. I must say it is interesting to read about, and the experiments researchers are doing give us pause for thought. Did you know that a research subject (the author, actually) found that he was surely gay according to the time he was hooked up to a "penile strain guage" and yet more bi than gay when the pupil dilation of his eyes was registered in another study?

I think it's just a whole lot easier to follow Whitman's path and try to walk in the shoes of our fellow human beings. Empathy is a skill you can learn—it includes other skills like listening and developing the patience to spend time with people who are not so much like yourself.

If you haven't spent some quality time with a person who identifies as bisexual it is high time you do. Let him or her tell her story so that you may walk a furlong with sympathy, not ignorance.

Trum Simmons is professor emeritus of English and advisor emeritus to HACC Allies.

legal column

By Leo L. Dunn, Attorney at Law

Trusts: Should One be in Your Future?

Trusts are considered an independent legal entity. This means that assets placed in a trust do not pass through the probate process and are not subject to state or federal inheritance tax. They are generally not part of an individual's assets when applying for federal or state program benefits. They may be liable for taxes on earnings just like a person.

Pennsylvania allows trusts to be created that live forever – perpetual trusts. This means a trust may be set up to provide benefits to children and grandchildren long after you are gone. This is a good way for a family to build long term wealth over time. A perpetual trust is also a great way to provide funding for a charity or alma mater after your death.

For a couple, placing your home and the bulk of your financial assets into a trust protects them for the surviving spouse in the event of death or for the community spouse in the event of nursing home need. While spouses in recognized marriages are protected to a great degree in both instances simply by the marriage laws, a trust can be of benefit if there are family members who could raise claims under Title 20 or if the couple has major holdings apart from their home.

Often a trust is set up to own property and hold assets that pay out a monthly stipend to the beneficiary(ies). This type of trust works well when one member of a couple is the money manager and the other is not good with money management. A trust can be set up that protects the home and principal from unwise use. Including a corporate bank trustee can further protect against unscrupulous parties getting an elderly single to "let them take care of everything" then disappearing with the bank accounts.

Trusts also work well for parents with young children to protect assets in the event of a catastrophe causing the death of both parents. A good plan will name guardians for the children that have actual custody and a separate person or entity to oversee the money. This eliminates the "let's put in a swimming pool because it will be good for the kids" type spending.

Trusts are great for providing funding, care and oversight of special needs adults long after their parents have departed.

Trusts can be used to provide for all of these concepts in one document. A couple can protect wealth for each other, have provisions to protect their children, and set up a charitable entity to provide scholarships or other service after they and their children no longer need the funds. A trust may even be written to split based on a given event such as children reaching 30 years of age so that one of the new trusts is for family beneficiaries and the other is for charity and the assets get divided between the two.

Trusts are very flexible and can be a great estate planning tool.

Leo Dunn is an attorney and counselor-at-law practicing in the Harrisburg area with a focus on the estate planning needs of the GLBT community. He may be reached at leodunnlaw@gmail.com

New IRS Video Helps Same-Sex Couples with Tax Tips

The Internal Revenue Service now has a YouTube video that provides useful tax tips to married same-sex couples.

The video is the latest addition to an online library featuring short IRS instructional videos on topics ranging from identity theft to new simplified home office deductions.

The new video, less than two minutes long, is available in English, Spanish and American Sign Language and can be accessed via IRS.gov.

Following last summer's Supreme Court decision invalidating a key provision of the Defense of Marriage Act, the IRS ruled that same-sex couples, legally married in jurisdictions that recognize their marriages, are now treated as married for federal tax purposes.

The ruling applies to all federal tax provisions where marriage is a factor, including filing status, claiming personal and dependency exemptions, taking the standard deduction, employee benefits, contributing to an IRA and claiming the earned income tax credit or child tax credit.

Visit IRS.gov to access these and other helpful tax resources.

2 PA, 1 MD Legislator among 12 on Watch List

By Louis Jacobson

In a list of 12 legislators to watch in 2014, two are from Pennsylvania and one is from Maryland. The list is published by Governing, the States and Localities, a trade journal for local government.

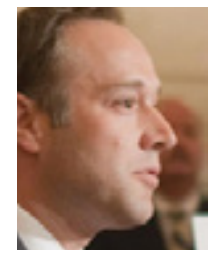
It's a tough time to be a politician, but these state lawmakers are really making a mark.

On a list of the most hated jobs, politicians consistently rank up there with telemarketers, used car salesmen, lawyers, parking enforcement officers and taxmen. And obviously, coming off a year that saw sequestration and the federal shutdown, the occupation is more unpopular now than ever with the general public. But President Theodore Roosevelt once said that good people should enter politics or else be governed by those who do. And despite what many may think of politicians, there are a number of good men and women working in the nation's 50 state legislatures.

Two years ago, the magazine compiled a similar list of legislators to watch, equally dividied between Republicans and Democrats. Now they've done it again. Three of the dozen are from Pennsylvania. As was the case with the first list, there are scores of noble and noteworthy lawmakers in state government right now. This list in particular includes legislators who have shown a keen ability to strike alliances across party lines, or who have racked up significant accomplishments during their time in office so far. Each of these lawmakers has a compelling personal story that informs the way he or she governs. And many of these state representatives and senators could soon win higher office.

Boyle

Boyle, elected to the House in 2008, grew up in a Philadelphia row house as the son of a crossing guard and a maintenance custodian who emigrated from Ireland at 19. Boyle, the first in his family to attend college, earned an undergraduate degree from the University of Notre Dame, where he also worked as a sportscaster. He later earned a master's degree from Harvard's Kennedy School of Government and worked as a management consultant for the Naval Sea Systems Command and the Military Sealift Command. In the state House, Boyle has styled himself a champion of labor unions. Last August, he gained attention for a bill that would give free tuition at state universities in exchange for a share of future earnings. Boyle has served as chairman of the House Democratic Campaign Committee and recently threw his hat into the ring for a competitive 2014 primary for the U.S. House seat being vacated by gubernatorial candidate Allyson Schwartz. Boyle's brother, Kevin, also serves in the state House from a neighboring district.



Fleck

Fleck was first elected to the state House in 2006 from a rural, conservative district west of Harrisburg. An Eagle Scout and later a Boy Scouts official, Fleck earned a bachelor's degree from Liberty University. His family has farmed and hunted in the district for generations. He's focused on agriculture and tourism, and has secured bipartisan support for efforts to prohibit privatizing health services at state correctional facilities (his district includes two of them). He has also been very active in seeking to increase oversight of publicly funded charter schools. In 2012, he made headlines when he announced he was gay. After being easily re-elected multiple times, Fleck is now facing primary opposition. "Coming out is hard enough, but doing it in the public eye is definitely something I never anticipated," he told the Huntingdon Daily News.

Mizeur

Mizeur won her seat in the state House in 2006 following a competitive primary. But even before that, she had established a national profile for herself among Democrats. From 2003 to 2006, Mizeur held senior policy and campaign positions with then-Massachusetts Sen. John Kerry, who was the Democratic presidential nominee in 2004. (She has also been tapped by President Obama to join the Democratic National Committee's executive committee.) In the legislature, she has played a key role passing measures on same-sex marriage (Mizeur is a lesbian) and on expanding health care to children and family planning services to help low-income women. Mizeur, who's running for governor in a tough primary battle in 2014, has proposed legalizing marijuana in the state and using the tax revenue from that to fund pre-K education. (Heather Mizeur for Maryland)

Other legislators on the list include: Marcus Brandon, North Carolina House (D), Jason Carter, Georgia Senate (D), Marilinda Garcia, New Hampshire House (R), Elbert Guillory, Louisiana Senate (R), Cyrus Habib, Washington House (D), Tina Kotek, Oregon House (D), Frank LaRose, Ohio Senate (R), T.W. Shannon, Oklahoma House (R).

OUT OF TOWN
by Andrew Collins

One of the most historic and beloved public food markets in the country West Side Market is in the heart of Cleveland's LGBT-popular Ohio City neighborhood. - Photo by Andrew Collins.

Cleveland and Gay Games 9

The host this summer of the ninth installment of the Gay Games festival, which was established in 1994 (and then known as the Gay Olympics), Cleveland has been the focus of an ambitious, ongoing urban renaissance in recent years. The downtown core, with its considerable stock of stately early-20th-century buildings, has seen an influx of attractions and hotels, while outlying neighborhoods like Detroit-Shoreway, Ohio City, Tremont and Cleveland Heights have become magnets for cool indie restaurants, coffeehouses, theaters, arts spaces and retail shops. This working-class metropolis that suffered through a deep urban decline during much of the second-half of the 20th century is looking better than ever these days, and locals are counting on the Gay Games as a perfect opportunity to show LGBT visitors what Cleveland has to offer.

Gay Games 9

The ninth edition of the Gay Games – which have taken place previously in Cologne, Chicago, Sydney, Amsterdam, New York City, Vancouver and San Francisco – is set to take place in Cleveland as well as nearby Akron from Aug. 9 through Aug. 16. More than 35 different sports will be represented at the games, including beach volleyball, cycling, flag football, golf, open-water swim, rock-climbing, soccer, softball, tennis and many others. There are also two "cultural" events, band and chorus, and all kinds of related gatherings, ceremonies and parties will take place throughout the week at venues around town, including downtown's Festival Village (the new Mall C park, at City Hall and overlooking FirstEnergy Stadium).

You can learn more about competing, watching events and attending the Games at the official Gay Games site (gg9cle.com), which lists a full calendar of events, travel planning information, a history of the games and even details on how to volunteer to help with this internationally renowned gathering.

Exploring Cleveland

Ironically, the abandonment of downtown Cleveland (positivelycleveland.com) during the 1950s through 1970s helped to preserve the commercial core's bounty of Victorian and turn-of-the-century commercial and residential architecture, from warehouse buildings that stood empty for decades to gleaming art deco towers that have undergone complete renovations in recent decades. Sports stadiums, theaters and a glitzy casino have all contributed to the current urban buzz.

Action has always and still does revolve around Public Square, a regal park of fountains and statuary over which looms the focal point of the downtown comeback, the completely restored Tower City Center. Built in 1929, this 52-story complex houses restaurants, upscale shops and a commuter rail station. Adjoining the complex, the Horseshoe Casino opened in 2012 inside an impressive Victorian-era department store building and contains more than 2,000 slot machines and about 90 table games.

Walk a several blocks east along Euclid Avenue and you'll reach the downtown theater district, Playhouse Square, a hub of highly respected performance venues. And a short walk south are two prominent sports venues, Quicken Loans Arena (home to the NBA's Cavaliers) and Progressive Field (where baseball's Indians play).

A few blocks north, along the shores of Lake Erie, the pyramidal, I.M. Pei-designed Rock and Roll Hall of Fame is one of the seminal pop-cultural museums in the world, offering visitors an invigorating tour of music over the past 70 years – exhibits touch on the entire history of the rock genre, with special attention given to the nearly 300 renowned artists who have been inducted into the Hall of Fame, including LGBT-popular acts like Donna Summer, R.E.M., Blondie, Michael Jackson, Queen, David Bowie, and Elton John. In 2014, famed (and openly gay) Beatles manager Brian Epstein was among the inductees. Nearby cultural highlights include the Great Lakes Science Center and the home of the NFL's Cleveland Browns, FirstEnergy Stadium. Across the marina from the Rock and Roll Hall of Fame, Voinovich Bicentennial Park is a pleasant lakeside spot for a picnic, or admiring the city skyline, and it's also where Cleveland Gay Pride takes place each year in June.

Abutting downtown is the Warehouse District, a tract of beautifully restored cast-iron buildings that now house several good restaurants, a handful of funky shops and galleries, and dozens of gorgeous loft apartments. Down a steep hill are the city's once-anemic river flats, which have also been spiffed up with a handful of notable eateries and nightspots as well as the impressive Greater Cleveland Aquarium.

Drive 10 minutes east of downtown to reach the city's primary cultural and educational center, 550-acre University Circle. Don't miss the Georgian-style Cleveland Museum of Art, which recently completed a fantastic renovation and expansion that has greatly increased the exhibit space. Within walking distance are such outstanding attractions as the Cleveland Museum of Natural History, the Cleveland Institute of Art, the Cleveland Orchestra, the Museum of Contemporary Art Cleveland and the highly rewarding Cleveland Botanical Garden. From here you're a quick hop to Cleveland Heights, a diverse and lively community with a sizable gay and lesbian following and a wealth of inviting shops and restaurants, most of them along bustling Coventry Road.

In the other direction, just west of downtown, Ohio City is the name of a historic neighborhood (not a separate municipality) that abounds with fine Victorian homes and

continued on following page

Reproductive Rights *continued from page one*

Specialties Corporation, based out of East Earl, is a far smaller company (less than 1,000 employees) that manufactures wood cabinets and is owned and operated by a religious family of Mennonite Christians. Both companies want an exemption from ACA's contraception mandate. Hobby Lobby's lawyers claim the healthcare reform law violates the corporation's free exercise of religion by requiring that they provide their employees with a health plan that covers the intrauterine device (IUD) and oral contraceptive pills that go against their clients' religious beliefs. According to Hobby Lobby's website the Greens and their family businesses "have no moral objection to providing 16 of the 20 FDA-approved contraceptives required under the HHS mandate and do so at no additional cost to employees under their self-insured health plan." What the Greens do object to is having to provide contraceptive care to their employees that they deem to be forms of abortion (like the "morning after pill").

Marci A. Hamilton, a professor of law at Cordoza Law School at Yeshiva University in New York City, who advises lawmakers on church-state issues, tells *Central Voice* that science refutes the idea that the four types of birth control Hobby Lobby refuses to cover are, in fact, abortifacients (abortion-inducing agents) , and asks, "what happens when the next employer fights funding for vaccinations, blood transfusions, or HIV medications? The primary problem for the believers in this case is that they have not offered a credible limiting principle to their theory."

As noted by Hamilton, this case is inextricably linked to LGBT rights in this country because of what could become the slippery slope in varying interpretations of the Supreme Court's decision to and its language that could lead to discrimination. One need only look to the highly-publicized case of Arizona governor Jan Brewer vetoing the so-called "turn the gays away" bill only after pressure from outside sources warned her of its far-reaching implications. The case in Arizona is not an isolated incident. Similar bills are springing up across the country under the guise of religious protections and religious freedoms. On April 1 the Mississippi legislature approved a measure that would enable businesses and individuals to refuse services to any person they choose purely on religious grounds referencing the Religious Freedom Reformation Act (RFRA) of 1993 which prevents laws that burden a person's free exercise of religion.

And while there is no mention of LGBT individuals specifically in the Mississippi measure, the legislation would certainly discriminate against LGBT people seeking any number of services in the state because these services—from dining at a restaurant or being treated at a hospital—could be refused or denied based solely upon one's personal religious convictions. When one considers what a religious exemption could cover, the implications are frightening. Where is the line ultimately drawn? All the Mississippi bill needs is a signature from governor Phil Bryant and, at press time, he says he's going to sign the bill, which means it will go into effect July 1.

Activists for religious freedom cite the First Amendment and believe individuals and corporations should be able to refuse service to whomever they choose if it conflicts with one's religious beliefs. Because of the First Amendment, churches are exempt from nondiscrimination laws in most cases, but private companies are not religious institutions even if they are owned by religious-minded people. Hamilton believes the RFRA is "a license for mischief and for believers to pursue ends that are beyond the pale. It is a formula that invites discrimination and inevitably hurts the vulnerable."

This may all sound familiar to those who remember Mitt Romney's caught-on-video "corporations are people" catchphrase that exploded the debate about the differences between corporations and individuals back in 2011. Sebelius vs. Hobby Lobby is poised to become the Citizens United of the war against marriage equality and refuel or add fuel to the already blazing cultural war in this country. The question at the heart of this case is nearly the same: Do corporations have, in this case freedom-of-religion, rights like individuals do? If the Supreme Court finds that they do, then religious employers of for-profit corporations will have grounds for refusing coverage on a litany of items that could include anything from HIV medications for a gay patient or pre-natal care for an unwed mother because of religious objections about that person's "lifestyle."

While only Hobby Lobby and Conestoga Wood Specialties are named in the lawsuit, some 100 companies have also sued the U.S. government for the same rights to deny some type of medical coverage on religious grounds. If Hobby Lobby prevails in the Supreme Court case and its plaintiffs have religious or moral objection to providing contraception, surely it stands to reason that other types of privately-owned, for-profit businesses would be able to find convenient ways to discriminate against all kinds of people—LGBT, minorities, women—based on so-called religious freedom.

Central Voice reached out to Hobby Lobby and Conestega Wood but were told by their representatives they were not available for interviews or comment at this time.

Cleveland *continued from previous page*

has become a hot spot in recent years for trendy eateries and lounges (notably along West 25th Street) as well as one of the Midwest's great culinary attractions, West Side Market, which was begun in 1840s and is home to some 100 vendors proffering everything from fresh produce to Polish pierogis to local artisan cheeses - it's really a chance for local people-watching at its best.

Venture a short drive south to another of the city's more recently gentrified neighborhoods, Tremont, where along main drags like Starkweather Avenue and Literary Road you'll find dozens of inviting lounges and hipster-favored eateries. Another up-and-coming neighborhood on the city's west side is Detroit-Shoreway, which contains a cluster of noteworthy cafes and theaters along Detroit Avenue between West 58th and West 75th streets.

Farther west, in the Edgewater Park neighborhood as well as the neighboring suburb of Lakewood, you'll find a handful of gay-oriented businesses, including bars and restaurants – this area is more popular with locals than visitors, but it is worth checking out if you're interested in LGBT nightlife.

Dining and Nightlife

Cleveland's dining scene has long been influenced by its sizable immigrant populations, with restaurants serving Eastern European, Polish, Greek and Italian food especially popular. In recent years, however, sophisticated downtown restaurants and inviting neighborhood eateries have been making their mark, serving regionally sourced farm-to-table fare and ethnic foods from more far-flung cultures.

In the downtown core, don't miss Cowell & Hubbard (cowellhubbard.com) for a romantic, pre-theater feast, or the convivial Greenhouse Tavern (thegreenhousetavern.com) for exceptionally well-crafted "gastro-pub" dining and drinking. When venturing east, look to locally beloved Tommy's Restaurant (tommyscoventry.com) for delish vegan and vegetarian cuisine and swell-elegant L'Albatros (albatrosbrasserie.com) – near the Cleveland Museum of Art – for deftly executed contemporary French food. And be sure to stop by artisan-roaster Phoenix Coffee for an expresso drink (there are other Phoenix locations in downtown's Playhouse Square and on Lee Road). Ohio City food highlights include Bar Cento (barcento.com) for mod Italian fare and neighboring Bier Markt (bier-markt.com) for craft brews, as well as the SOHO Kitchen & Bar (sohocleveland.com), which turns out superb New South cuisine, like New Orleans-barbecue scallops and crisp fried chicken with baked mac 'n' cheese.

Not far away in Tremont, critically acclaimed Lolita (lolitarestaurant.com) – which is helmed by celeb chef Michael Symon – and Bac Asian American Bistro (bactremont.com) wow visitors with creative cuisine, while trendy but laid-back Fat Cats (coolplacestoeat.com/fatcats.html) is one of the coolest neighborhood restaurants in the city (try to make it here for the wildly popular brunch on Saturdays). Gypsy Beans & Bakery (gypsybeans.com) in Detroit-Shoreway's Gordon Square Arts District is a groovy coffeehouse, while nearby Luxe Kitchen & Lounge (luxecleveland.com) can be counted on for tasty pizzas, tapas and eclectic small plates. Out in the Cudell/Edgewater area, the Diner on Clifton (dineronclifton.com) is worth stopping by for breakfast, lunch or late-night dining – it's a favorite among patrons of the area's nearby gay bars.

The top gay nightspots in Cleveland are include Ohio City's fun video bar and club Bounce (bouncecleveland.com), which also has a quite good restaurant serving tapas, flatbreads, sandwiches, and the like; the popular Hawk Bar (thehawkbar.com), Cocktails Cleveland, and Twist dance clubs, which are all out west in the Cudell/Edgewater neighborhood (near Lakewood); and eastern downtown's rough-and-tumble men's cruise bar, the Leather Stallion Saloon (leatherstallion.com). Not far from the latter, you'll also find one of the largest gay bathhouse compounds in the country, Flex Cleveland (flexspas.com), which also has a men's hotel, gym, and bar.

Where to Stay in Cleveland

The city's leading hotels are mostly clustered downtown around the Tower City, Gateway and Playhouse Square districts, within walking distance of top attractions. Keep in mind that several new hotels are currently in the planning stages, including a boutique property under development by the gay-popular Kimpton brand. Steps from the city's top theaters, the Wyndham Cleveland at Playhouse Square (wyndham.com) earns high marks for its central location, friendly service, and spacious rooms – book a King Corner unit for stunning views of the downtown skyline. Arguably the poshest accommodation in town, the stately Ritz-Carlton, Cleveland (ritzcarlton.com) rises high above Tower City and Public Market, its 205 rooms outfitted with such cushy creature comforts as marble bathrooms, iPod docks and ultra-plush linens. The hotel's restaurant, Muse, is one of the top spots in town for a special-occasion feast.

Out by the museums in University Circle, the InterContinental Suites Hotel Cleveland and InterContinental Cleveland (ihg.com/intercontinental) are excellent, high-end choices. While the Hilton Garden Inn Cleveland Downtown (hiltongardeninn3.hilton.com), hip and contemporary Aloft Cleveland Downtown (starwoodhotels.com/alofthotels) and Hampton Inn Cleveland Downtown (hamptoninn3.hilton.com) are all excellent, well-located, mid-priced options.

Additionally, Cleveland has some wonderfully charming, gay-friendly B&Bs situated in historic Ohio City. Consider the grand Stone Gables B&B (stonegables.net), a period-furnished, gay-owned 1883 stunner with high ceilings, numerous fireplaces and five richly appointed guest rooms; and the Wallace Manor B&B (wallacemanor.com), a regal stone mansion with three spacious rooms (two of them with claw-foot soaking tubs). Two other great choices in the neighborhood are the warmly appointed Clifford House B&B (cliffordhouse.com), a three-room, gay-owned inn with reasonable rates that include a delicious full breakfast; and the handsome J. Palen House (jpalenhouse.com), which occupies an old brewmaster's home, and has nine stylishly romantic, light-filled rooms and suites (including a cottage and a separate guest house).

Andrew Collins produces the site GayTravel.About.com and contributes to many other travel magazines and websites.

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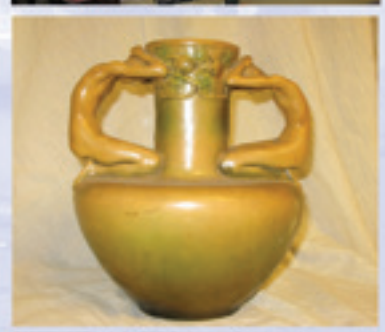

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Fauci Excited but Cautious about New HIV Gene Therapy

Gay male patient explains procedure

The March 5 blockbuster announcement regarding HIV gene therapy "needs lots of further study," Dr. Anthony Fauci told *Central Voice* about news that investigators had initial success with thwarting HIV by intentionally altering the genetic makeup of human cells. Fauci is head of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID).

Dr. Anthony Fauci

Central Voice also talked to Matt Sharp who participated in the HIV gene therapy clinical trail.

Fauci says the gene-altering process is called "editing" because "we change your cells forever." Scientists removed cells from 12 infected individuals and altered them so that HIV cannot infect them. The experimental procedure, Fauci says, is similar to research that has been tried with cancer.

"We do not know if patients need partial or complete replacement of all CD4 cells or how long partial or complete cell replacement with modified cells may last," Fauci cautions. CD4 cells help us fight infections like HIV.

So far, it appears that HIV is not able to attack the edited cells and that's promising," Fauci said.

Patient talks

Like Dad says: Talk to the guy who owns one and that's what *Central Voice* did. Matt Sharp gives readers the skinny on exactly how the HIV gene therapy clinical trial procedure works.

"First you are evaluated through a thorough medical screening process to make sure you fit what the research protocol calls for," Sharp says. That means filling out lots of paperwork.

Next, participants go to a medical site for several times for blood draws. "This is time consuming," Sharp points out.

If eventually a participant fits the medical research profile, an IV is inserted in each arm. Blood is drawn from the left arm, run through a device that separates white blood cells from red blood cells. The white cells are saved so the CD4 cells can be "edited" to mimic the CCR5 gene structure. The red cells are returned immediately to the patient through the right arm as part of the procedure.

"The white cells are then sent off to a lab where they are edited by the addition of 'zinc finger nuclease,' then frozen and sent back for transfusion back into a patient," Sharp explains. It takes about one month to complete this lab process before the edited cells can be transfused back into the patient. "The back-in transfusion takes about 15-20 minutes," Sharp says.

If participating in an HIV gene therapy clinical trial, patients will be expected to keep weekly, then monthly, then quarterly medical appointments to insure the research is not harming them. "That's standard procedure in one variation or another in any clinical trial," Sharp says.

Future research steps:

• Evaluate the experimental treatment in more volunteers. To volunteer for the study, ask your HIV doctor about enrollment through NIH.

• How long those infused with their own 'edited' cells will retain them.

• How long 'edited' CD4 cells will last.

• Determine the number of 'edited' cells an individual may need in order to achieve protection against HIV infecting cells.

• How often will patients need to be infused with their 'edited' cells?

Here's how the genetic modification of your cells works:

Each of us has a protein called CCR5. This protein is the "doorway" through which HIV infects cells. The doorway is on each CD4 cell. These are the cells that help us fight infections. They are called "helper" cells because they help us fight all infections, not only HIV.

In some people the CCR5 protein is defective but in a good way when it comes to HIV. Their naturally occurring genetic version of CCR5 does not allow HIV to enter CD4 cells. Thus the defect becomes an advantage. To create this advantage in HIV-infected individuals, scientists altered the CCR5 protein to mimic the naturally occurring version in people who fight off or more slowly experience HIV infection. Modification of the CCR5 protein does not allow HIV to infect CD4 cells.

In the research reported on last week, scientists collected CD4 cells from each of 12 HIV-infected volunteers whose virus is successfully controlled by HIV medicines. The cells were treated in the laboratory with molecular tools called zinc-finger nucleases (ZFNs). Bottom line: The ZFNs "edit" cells so that HIV cannot infect them. Next, each of the 12 patients had their own cells put back into their bloodstream, about 10 billion of their own helper cells. After the infusion, each patient had roughly roughly one-fifth of their infection-fighting cells "edited".

After waiting four weeks, 6 of the 12 patients stopped taking their HIV medicines for 8 to 12 weeks as a planned step in the study. The result: HIV replication was controlled during the entire 12-week time period when no HIV medicines were taken.

Chamber on the move

By Bill Krenz

Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce

Executive Director Position Announced

The Central Pennsylovania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce is excited to announce that our growth has afforded us the opportunity to hire an executive director. The new position will help us capitalize on untapped opportunities to expand the business equality movement here in the region.

Last January, the board invited Mark Guenther, executive director for the Capital Area Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce, Washington, DC, and the 2012 National Gay and Lesbian Chamber of the Year, to facilitate a conversation at our board retreat about the best practices he has experienced working in his role.

A special committee including Chris Gatesman, Holtgate Podiatry, Betsy Devitz, Members 1st FCU, Harry Young, Hershey Entertainment and Resorts and chamber vice president, and Deb McClain, Members 1st Insurance Services and chamber president & CEO has been formed to assist in the hiring process.

Stay tuned for details of the job posting.

Hiring an executive director will enable the chamber to enhance service to its members and be even more effective in advancing our mission here in the region.

Past Events

The chamber held a mixer April 16 that featured a ribbon-cutting and grand launching of Mx2 Event Designs at St@rt-Up in Harrisburg. David Cole Snook, president of Mx2 Event Designs, a resident business at St@rt-Up, arranged for Mark Preston, formerly of "The Letterman," to perform at the event.

Future Events

May 14, Heidi Duckworth, of Wells Fargo Advisors, will be hosting a mixer at the exquisite Hamilton Club, the chamber's first 2014 event in Lancaster.

June 11 the American Red Cross is hosting the chamber at their facility in Harrisburg.

July 9 Hetrick, Bitner, Geigle and Smith Funeral Homes will host the chamber at their Linglestown Road location. They are planning a themed barbeque picnic, weather permitting.

August 13, Members 1st Federal Credit Union welcomes us back to their Hempstead Road Branch in Lancaster.

Please check the chamber's website (www.cpglcc.org) regularly for registration information for all events, a list of future events, and a listing of member businesses.

Mx2 Designs, headquartered in Harrisburg's StartUp, hosted the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce April 16. The event and entertainment firm formally held a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Entertainment was provided by Mark Preston, formerly of "The Lettermen" and a Vocal Group Hall of Fame Inductee Recording Artist. Mx2 owner David Cole Snook, right, said, "I am so glad to be back in the region." He had a professional career with international cruise lines that provided experience in all aspects of event planning. Bri Buffington, left, longtime manager of operations, and Mechanicsburg native, "We're a team effort with access to the best in the event planning business."

Sims Faces Challenge

By Central Voice
As reported by PoliticsPA, written by Brittany Foster, Managing Editor

In April 2012, Brian Sims defeated long-time Representative Babette Josephs (D-Philadelphia) in the Democratic primary.

He won by just 235 votes, and with no general election opponent became the first openly gay representative elected in the state of Pennsylvania.

It was a bitter affair. Sims formerly worked on her campaigns. LGBT groups supported Sims despite the fact that Josephs was the most outspoken ally of the gay community in the House (the district includes Philly's Gayborhood). According to several sources close to the House Democrats, Josephs is preparing for a rematch and has to Philly Daily News' Chris Brennan that she is running. Several Democratic sources said Josephs is receiving encouragement from some of her former colleagues.

In his ongoing efforts to build a statewide coalition in the House, Sims has been direct in his support for primary opponents to some of his colleagues. He endorsed Jared Solomon, who is running against Rep. Mark Cohen (D-Phila) and Billy Smith over Rep. Margo Davidson (D-Delaware).

In the 13th congressional district primary, Sims backed state Senator Daylin Leach (D-Montgomery) over his colleague, state Rep. Brendan Boyle (D-Phila).

Two Democrats close to the Philadelphia delegation said Josephs is being encouraged to run by Cohen, Davidson and Boyle. Boyle and Davidson dismissed the suggestion.

Boyle's campaign denies that there has been any recruiting or involvement in the race.

"Margo is focused on her district and her voters," Davidson's campaign manager Shannon Marietta told PoliticsPA. "Instead of focusing on insider gossip, we are focused on the issues of her district – like raising the minimum wage, new job growth and fighting for the underprivileged." Cohen declined to comment.

One Philadelphia Democratic operative said Sims' political maneuvers had opened the door for a challenge.

"It's very unusual for one incumbent to pick fights with so many of their colleagues," he said. "I don't know if [Boyle, Cohen and Davidson] are involved with Babette's decision, but I can't say I'd blame them if they were."

Central Voice: We report. You decide. That what newspapers do.

LGBT Activists Demand Stoning at Homophobic Harlem Church

By PolicyBear

Over 50 LGBT activists protested for over an hour in the rain recently outside ATLAH World Missionary Church in Harlem, demanding that the church's controversial pastor, James David Manning, emerge and administer the stonings that his public sign recently called for. Until it was vandalized last week, the church's marquee read, "Jesus would stone homos. Harlem is a homo free zone."

Holding a forty-foot rainbow banner and shouting chants like "Harlem queers under attack! What do we do? ACT UP! Fight back!" and "Hey hey! Ho ho! David Manning has got to go!" the multiracial crowd also brandished signs that read, "God is love" and "Let he without sin cast the first stone."

At one point the rowdy group moved to the side entrance of the church, repeatedly ringing the building's buzzer and raising their fists while they shouted, "We're here for our stoning! We're here for our stoning!" Several church members watched from inside through a glass door, smiling and chatting.

Harlem resident and transgender activist Jennifer Louise Lopez called for the protest after the recent video of her interaction with a befuddled ATLAH staffer went viral and drew strong support: *http://bit.ly/1lk8zSV.*

Lopez told the crowd that Manning had served time in prison for larceny, burglary, and criminal possession of a weapon, and said, "He is a very hateful and dangerous man."

She spoke out against using scripture to brainwash congregations by delivering hateful messages. "We will no longer stand by while Evangelical Christian churches misrepresent us," she said. Lopez, a United Methodist Christian, called for an Easter day global demonstration of solidarity against churches that preach hate. She led the crowd in demanding, "Not one more day!" of misrepresentation.

Jim Eigo, a veteran ACT UP member who works with the AIDS Prevention Task Force at Harlem United, said "AIDS is still killing so many in this neighborhood. We know that words of hate and retribution like Pastor Manning's words just aid and abet this disease." Eigo said that Manning's bigoted message "keeps people in the closet about their sex lives" and "keeps people from getting tested for HIV and from seeking out effective treatment until they are already sick and the virus has done great and irreparable damage to their bodies."

Activist Lovari read a passage from the Book of Matthew 19:12 that he said showed support for androgynous and LGBT individuals, "For there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb: and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men: and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He who is able to accept this, let him accept it," he read.

making sense of life

By Dr. Terry Drew Karanen

Living in the Present

In my column last month I wrote, "As humans we love to acknowledge beginnings and endings. That's a real blockage to living in the 'now' and seeing beyond the confines of linear time, but I'll talk about that in my next column." And that's exactly what I intend to do!

When I use the phrase "living in the now" I mean living in the present. But present can often imply a period of time – a day, a year or "in our time." The *now* is a far smaller unit of time. In fact, it's almost non-existent. How then can we be expected to live in the now when the now barely exists?

That's a good question and within the discussion of the answer lies the main reason why most of us do not live in the now. Most of us live in the past or the future through worry. We worry about what could have been, or what we should have done, or why someone didn't do what we wanted them to do. We fret about what will happen tomorrow or how the past will impact our future. In doing so we become stuck in a reality that has passed or has not yet arrived, all the time ignoring what is currently happening right in front of us.

Mahatma Gandhi said, "The future depends on what we do in the present." It is in the present that we can wash away the past and plan for the future. This is the way I put it: "We learn from the past, plan for the future, but live in the present." The problem for our 21st century western culture is that we've created lives for ourselves that do not allow us the means to effectively live in a present that promotes learning and planning in a more effective manner.

To live in the present, to enjoy each and every moment of each and every day, we must be able to focus on our surroundings. But the lives we have created include 24/7 news, instant messaging, immediate response times to everyone, and little time to enjoy life. We now use our smart phones, tablets and other devices before and after our 40-plus hour workweek, becoming available to anyone and at anytime, and regularly expose even our most intimate thoughts and feelings to strangers via social media.

There's a balance to achieve and it might not be easy for many of us. It requires that we let go of the past, the worries, the guilt and the regrets. To do that means we must forgive ourselves and others. People forget or perhaps don't understand that forgiveness is more for us than it is for the person whose forgiveness we seek. It breaks the bonds that tie us to the past and allows us to move forward into the future.

Using our imagination to worry about the future is using our energy to create a reality we don't want. Instead, focusing on our goals and our plans to achieve success will help to clear the way for the happiness and prosperity we seek. But all this work will be for naught if we cannot take the time to focus on where we are right now.

When we fret about the past we're bringing it into the present. If we ignore planning now for a better future we will continue to repeat our mistakes from the past, ending up with a future that's no better than the past we regret. Becoming more effective in living in the present and enjoying what we have is simple, not easy, but simple. It means turning OFF your mobile device when you're having coffee or a meal with a friend to fully enjoy their company and give both of you the respect you deserve. It means unlinking that same device from the numerous email accounts you probably have, stopping demands from attacking you from numerous directions. It means taking care of yourself first so that you can be available to be there for others.

There is a term I use for living in the present: Childlike wonderment. Could you be like a small child, exploring the world for the very first time? Could you look at everyone and everything around you for whom and what they are without preconceived notions or judgment? I suggest that doing so might just reduce your stress level to a place you might not have visited recently. Give it a shot!

Dr. Terry Drew Karanen is the Founder and Spiritual Leader of Center for Spiritual Living Cumberland Valley and a licensed social worker in private practice. For more information, see: http://newthoughtpa.org/

Free Federal Gov't Publications Address LGBT Issues

Two free publications from the Federal government are designed to help families and professional caregivers deal with LGBT issues. "Guide for Helping Families Support Their LGBT Children" is a candid and honest discussion for parents. "A Practitioner's Resource Guide: Helping Families to Support Their LGBT Children" to assist healthcare and social service practitioners in engaging with and helping families support their lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) children. This guide describes the early ages of self-awareness and the coming out process for LGBT youth and discusses the critical role of families in reducing the risks and promoting the well-being of LGBT children. both publications can be found at *http://store.samhsa.gov.*

Trans Leader Mara Keisling Talks

By Frank Pizzoli

Mara Keisling

"Everything," Mara Keisling answered when asked what's different regarding LGBT civil rights now and when she started out as an advocate and activist.

A 1977 Susquehanna Township High School graduate, Keisling has been executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality since 2002. Keisling is a Penn State University graduate and completed graduate work at Harvard University.

In town to address the TranscentralPA annual conference, she sat down with *Central Voice* to discuss transgender civil rights and the LGBT movement in general.

"I say 'everything' when you ask me what has changed because everywhere you look change is occurring," Keisling said. She remembers years ago when a local high school student's car was firebombed for being 'different' and the community came to his aid. "Things like are less likely to happen today," she said. "Now we have out gay students and out gay teachers."

Regarding the general direction of the LGBT movement Keisling says, "The movement is now focused on marriage equality, that's its primary goal, to achieve equity." Transgender issues, Keisling points out, are "broader in scope and touch the L,G,and B in the equation. When we achieve a transgender victory it easily spills over" into other parts of the overall demographic.

Whether or not Pennsylvania is at a "tipping point" on LGBT civil rights, Keisling does say, "No elected official at state level - Republican, Democrat, Independent - will ever view LGBT civil rights in the same way."

On the "Hillary" factor, Keisling says, "Clinton has been a good ally as secretary of state and senator" and she expects her to stay loyal if she runs for president.

Where does the larger, beyond marriage sector, of the LGBT civil rights movement intersect with other Progressive political groups?

"Immigration is where we have had an impact and issues converge," Keisling says. Immigration reform is an LGBT civil rights issue because, for example, gay immigrant detainees are held longer than non-gay immigrant detainees.

Immigration detention data, Keisling says, "indicates that non-gay detainees are held for about 28 days in and gay detainees can, and are, held for as long as eight months in solitary confinement." Detention in solitary confinement for that long has, Keisling notes, been defined as torture by watchdog and governmental groups.

A few days after her *Central Voice* interview, 51 LGBTQ organizations called for the Obama Administration to halt deportations as the coalition prepared for the April 4-5 National Days of Action across the country. Among the two million immigrants deported by the Obama administration - 1,100 people deported every day, and 34,000 people caged in immigration detention centers every single night - are countless LGBTQ individuals, their family, friends, and loved ones, rganizewrs said.

Under the current system of detention and deportation, LGBTQ immigrants, especially transgender women of color, often experience horrific treatment within immigration detention centers, including violence, deprivation of necessary medical care, dehumanization and assaults on basic dignity, psychological torture in solitary confinement, and rape. A recent study demonstrated that transgender women survivors made up 20% of substantiated sexual assault claims in immigration detention.

Many detained LGBTQ immigrants simply give up and accept deportation rather than continue to fight for the asylum that they qualify for under existing law because their detention conditions are so unbearable.

"We have many challenges that remain but we have good momentum," Keisling concludes.

LGBT community center coalition

By Louie Marven
Executive Director
LGBT Community Center Coalition of Central PA

Get out and walk with the Center

May 17 is right around the corner. On that day the center and friends will walking in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community for the second time. We want you to walk with us. Consider forming a team from your workplace or social group as well.

The center is one of 45 participating local nonprofits, and Highmark underwrites the cost of the entire event. That means every dollar raised by our walkers comes directly to the center to support our mission. Sign up your team: walkforahealthycommunity.com.

Upcoming Educational Programming

The center has some vibrant panel discussions on the horizon.

May 6, the Women's Group presents a facilitated discussion on family-building that ranges from adopting as a same-sex couple to coming out to a child.

June 3, the Women's Group offers a reprise of last year's popular Women in Politics panel discussion. If you missed out last year, don't miss it again!

Regular Women's Group meetings are held the first Tuesday of each month, 7-9 p.m.

May 22 our Aging with Pride initiative welcomes Candace Sillers from Alder Health Services to present on sexual health and aging.

June 26 the center hosts a panel discussion on aftercare and advance planning.

One participant in our Aging with Pride programming recently commented: "The panel was awesome! And it's not only about the good ideas I took in my notes. It was also the fact that there is a group of folks who are going on this journey of learning together."

Join us on the journey! Aging with Pride programming includes two monthly social and educational gatherings at the center. On the second Thursdays of each month from noon-2 p.m., we host a Brown Bag Lunch and open discussion space. On the fourth Thursdays the center hosts social and educational programming 6-8 pm.

Farewell Interns

The center has been fortunate to have wonderful interns over the past year. Collectively, this year's group planned and facilitated activities, tabulated program outcomes, researched communities the center serves, supported the LGBT History Project, coordinated volunteers, and much more to support the center's mission.

As the Spring semester ends, we say goodbye to those who have spent the past academic year with us—Nicole Graby, Mia Jackson, and Alex Ochs—as well as those who have spent this past semester with us—Alli Cowles, Chalise Saunders, Katherine Tripp, and Sara Tyberg. (Mana Shaw also served as an intern with us in the Fall.)

Thanks to each of these fine folks for everything they contributed to the center! We are thrilled to see what you do next.

The mission of the LGBT Center of Central PA is to create common ground for the LGBT community and allies in central Pennsylvania by providing services through educational, cultural, and community activities that foster wholeness.

1,892 US Veterans Thought to Have Committed Suicide since Jan. 1

By Paul Szoldra, Business Insider

Nearly 1,900 military veterans are thought to have taken their own lives in just 2014 alone, according to an estimate from Iraq and Afghanistan Veterans of America, ABC reports.

Extrapolating from a 2012 VA report that found 22 veterans took their lives each day in 2009 and 2010, IAVA members planted 1,892 flags on the National Mall Thursday to commemorate the staggering figure.

"We are losing too many of our brothers and sisters nationwide. And we're storming the hill to change history and transform a landscape so that America will truly take care of its own who have shouldered the burdens of war," said IAVA Founder and CEO Paul Rieckhoff in a statement to *Business Insider*.

Planting the flags was part of a push from IAVA to "Storm the Hill" and get legislation passed to combat suicide within the military ranks. It's a huge issue — with more than half of the 2.6 million veterans of Iraq and Afghanistan still struggling with physical or mental health problems — many of which know a fellow service member who has attempted or committed suicide, *Washington Post* reports.

GREENBELT EVENTS

Conspirator
May 4 - Abbey Bar, Appalachian Brewing Company
Doors, 8 p.m; Show 9 p.m.

As an outlet to further explore electronic music production, Conspirator was formed in 2004 by Aron Magner and Marc Brownstein (keyboardist and bassist for The Disco Biscuits), and DJ Omen. Unleashed is a crystal clear demonstration of Conspirator's heavy, electronically produced core coupled with a skillful and melodic homage to live instrumentation.

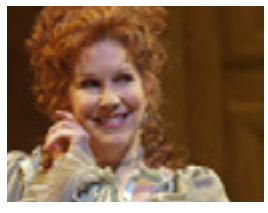
OPEN STAGE OF HARRISBURG

Court Street Series
May 9-10, 8 p.m.

On Oct. 6, 1998, Matthew Shepard was beaten and tied to a fence in the outskirts of Laramie, Wyoming, and left to die. He died six days later. A month after the murder the members of Tectonic Theater Project traveled to Laramie and conducted interviews with the people of the town. The Laramie Project was a cultural pulse-taking that told of the personalities and events of the murder and its aftermath. Ten years later, Tectonic members returned to Laramie to find out what has happened over the last ten years. Has Matthew's murder had a lasting impact on that community? How has the town changed as a result of this event? What does life in Laramie tell us about life in America 10 years later?
Tickets: 717-232-OPEN (6736)

MAJESTIC THEATRE
Gettysburg College

The MET Live in HD: La Cenerentola
May 10, 2014, 1- 5 p.m.



A peerless pair of Rossini virtuosos joins forces in La Cenerentola, a vocal tour de force for mezzo-soprano Joyce DiDonato, singing her first Met performances of the Cinderella title role, and the high-flying tenor Juan Diego Flórez, as her Prince Charming. Alessandro Corbelli and Luca Pisaroni complete the cast, with Met Principal Conductor Fabio Luisi leading the effervescent score. Kay Hoke, nationally recognized opera lecturer and Executive Director of Gettysburg College's Sunderman Conservatory of Music, will give a FREE pre-performance "brown bag" opera talk at noon in the balcony patrons lounge.
717-337-8200; majestictheater@gettysburg.edu

STAND CAPITAL

Chicago
May 6, 7:30 p.m.

Hailed as one of the "most important bands in music since the dawn of the rock and roll era" by former President Bill Clinton, the legendary rock and roll band with horns, Chicago, is the first American rock band to chart Top 40 albums in six decades.
Info: www.mystrandcapitol.org

SHARADIN BIGLER THEATRE
Ephrata Performing Arts Center

Magician Chris Ivey
June 29

EPAC proudly welcomes character juggler Chris Ivey to the Sharadin Bigler stage! Chris has been entertaining audiences for the past fifteen years with family-friendly shows displaying his unique blend of technical juggling excellence presented with an intense theatrical flair. His talents have earned him a Gold Medal at the 2002 World Juggling Championships, and he has appeared on numerous television programs, including a nationally televised commercial for CBS This Morning. Large corporations like RR Donelley, Turkey Hill Dairy, and Fulton Bank have relied on Chris's artistic and interactive presentations to entertain employees and customers alike. Chris has appeared at world famous venues like Busch Gardens Williamsburg and Baltimore Inner Harbor. Character Juggler Chris Ivey is the perfect choice to astound, entertain, and leave your audience with a show they will never forget!
Tickets: (717) 733-7966; epacboxoffice@gmail.com

HERSHEY THEATRE

Morrissey
June 19, 8 p.m.

Globally-renowned recording and performing artist, Morrissey will bring his U.S. Tour to Hershey. Special guest for the evening will be songwriter and keyboardist, Kristeen Young. These tour dates will come on the heels of Morrissey's completion of his forthcoming Harvest Records debut album – the artist's first since 2009's Years Of Refusal -- recorded in France with producer Joe Chiccarelli. Joining Morrissey on tour will be his longtime band, including Boz Boorer (guitar), Jesse Tobias (guitar), Solomon Walker (bass), Matthew Walker (drums) and Gustavo Manzur (keyboards). 1-800-745-3000, HersheyTheatre.com.

James Franco to Play "Gay" in Film

James Franco is set to play "ex-gay" in a new movie.

Page Six reports that Franco, who most recently was be seen on Broadway opposite Chris O'Dowd in "Of Mice and Men," will star in a forthcoming movie about "ex-gay" activist Michael Glatze. The movie is slated to start shooting in New York this summer and is being produced by Gus Van Sant, who previously directed Franco in 2008's "Milk."

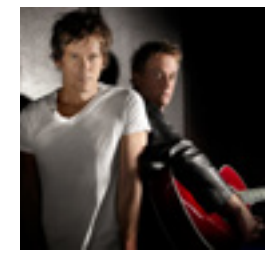
As The New York Times reported, Glatze founded Young Gay America (or Y.G.A.) magazine and toured the country for a documentary about gay teens before he had a controversial change of heart, renounced his sexuality and became a fundamentalist Christian.

"We cannot see the truth when we're blinded by homosexuality," Glatze wrote in a 2007 editorial for conservative news site WND. "We believe, under the influence of homosexuality, that lust is not just acceptable, but a virtue. But there is no homosexual 'desire' that is apart from lust."

Franco, 35, has played gay characters in "Milk" and "Howl," and teamed up with Travis Mathews to direct 2013's "Interior. Leather Bar.," which was deemed a "docu-fiction" exploration of queer sex and BDSM subculture.

"It's not like it's my mission to tell the stories of as many gay men as possible, although in some cases, I think it is the point," the Academy Award nominee told The Daily Beast last fall. "I guess that a lot of the figures that I love were gay."

Bacon Brothers Perform July 10



Long before Kevin Bacon launched his prolific stage and screen career, and before Michael Bacon became known as an acclaimed film and television composer, they were just two brothers from Center City, Philadelphia.

The brothers perform July 10 at Whitaker Center.

The Bacon Brothers' 2009 release, New Year's Day, is laden with their trademark gritty rock and a touch of Philly soul, and hearkens back to those roots in the City of Brotherly Love.

While still encountering critics due to Kevin's onscreen notoriety, the band continues to win believers – show by show, album by album. The New Yorker recently said, "Hollywood hangs like an albatross around the neck of any movie star turned musician, but this duo shakes off the burden of fame with sharply executed rock that has a blue-collar, rootsy edge."

With 2011 marking 16 years of the Bacon Brothers band's existence, any cynical preconceptions about well-known actors "dabbling" in music now can safely be discarded. The duo's latest album, Philadelphia Road —The Best of the Bacon Brothers (2011) is a collection of songs from the brothers' first four studio CDs, as well as Guilty of the Crime, which was recorded with the Bellamy Brothers.

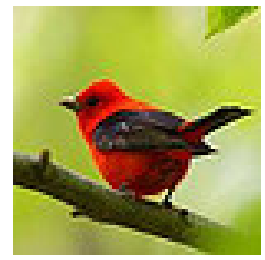
Info: whitakercenter.org or call 717/214-ARTS.

York events

39th Annual Olde York Street Fair
FREE, May 11, Downtown York City
Phone: 717-849-2217
yorkcity.org/oldeyorkstreetfair
The 39th Annual Olde York Street Fair, downtown York, and Continental Square, May 11, 12:30 - to 6 p.m. Featuring 100 arts/craft vendors, food vendors, Kid's Fun Block with bounce houses, climbing wall, games, face painting. Continental Square features live entertainment. FREE parking available on surrounding streets and in Philadelphia and King Street garages for nominal fee.

41st Annual Street Rod Nationals East Plus
June 6-08, 2014
York EXPO Center / York Fair
334 Carlisle Ave, York, PA 17404
Phone: 303-776-7841
www.nsra-usa.com
4,000 Street Rods, customs, muscle cars & specialty vehicles, plus manufacturer's exhibits, arts/crafts, model car contest, seminars, live entertainment, vintage parts swap meet. Family fun.

Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art Offers Summer Camps



Summer camp registration in now pen for The Ned Smith Center for Nature and Art. Camp registrations are taken on a first-come, first-served basis with full payment due at upon registration.

Fees are (unless otherwise noted): one-day camps, $40; two-day camps, $70; four-day camps, $120.

Fishing for Families
June 7, 10 a.m.-3 p.m.
Ages 8-14
The Ned Smith Center, Bass Pro Shops, Doc Fritchey Chapter of Trout Unlimited, and the PA Fish and Boat Commission partner to offer this fun-filled instructional camp. Parents invited to attend this camp. Skilled instructors discuss conservation, aquatic insects, fly tying, casting and fishing gear with time for casting instruction and practice along Wiconisco Creek. Equipment provided.
Fee: $18/ student; parents free

Digging into Dinosaurs
June 19-20, 9 a.m- 4 p.m.
Ages 8-12
Two-day camp packed with dinosaur fun and learning about geology, comparing meat-eaters and plant-eaters, and their survival. Includes activities, creative writing and puppetry. Each student goes home with a dino puppet and miniature stage they created.
Fee: $75.00/student

Archaeology Camp: Saving the Past for the Future
June 24-27, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Ages 10-18
Want to dig for historical artifacts? This camp is an actual excavation on a real site with a professional archaeologist. Sample fieldwork and methodology, lab analysis, preservation, interpretation. Living history re-enactors portray colonial figures.

Wild Garden Art Camp
July 10, 9 a.m.-4 p.m
Ages 8-12
Students create fabulous whimsical art projects using the outdoors as their inspiration - garden flags, decorate flower pots, tie-dye t-shirts with markers, and "petal pounding."

Geology Rocks!
July 15, 9 a.m.- 4:00 p.m.
Ages 8-12
Through hands-on activities, learn about local geology as well as geology beyond Pennsylvania boundaries. Each student goes home with a "loot" of rocks and fossils.

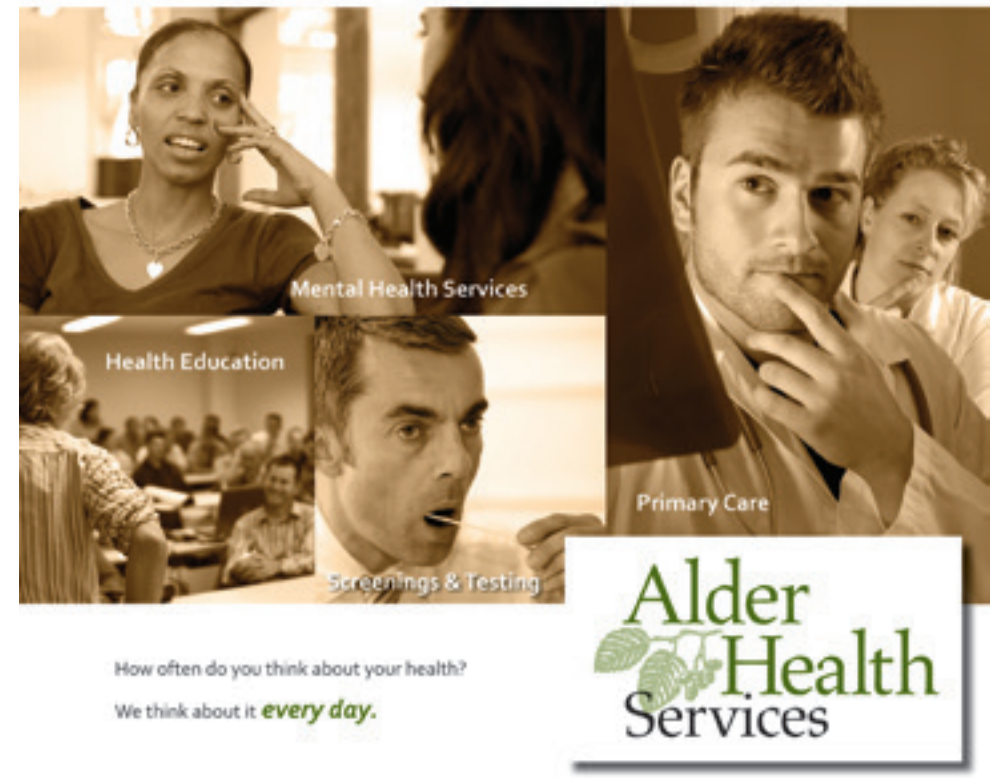
Tied Up In Knots: Macramé & Jewelry
July 30 -31, 9 a.m.- 4 p.m.
Ages 9-adult
Make your own macramé necklaces, anklets and bracelets, featuring your own handcrafted polymer clay beads.

Monarchs and Milkweed
Aug. 6, 9 a.m.-4 p.m.
Ages 8-adult
Learn about insects through interactive projects and activities, view butterflies up close by entering a netted butterfly enclosure. Includes activities and discussions about butterfly conservation, tagging monarchs, butterfly gardening, planting milkweed and what steps you can take to attract monarch butterflies to your own backyard.

Grandparents and Me: Owls!
Aug. 14, Various group times
Children ages 4-8 and older adult, grandparents welcome. Owls come in all shapes and sizes and live in a variety of habitats. Through activities, observations and stories, go on an "owl prowl" to learn about these magnificent birds. ZooAmerica presents live owl demonstration.
Fee: $18/person

Grandparents & Me: Gooey Art
Aug. 19, various group times
Children ages 4-8 and older adult, grandparents welcome. Wear your play clothes for this messy learning experience that combine unlikely ingredients to create some amazing projects. Aprons provided. Each adult limited to two children.
Fee: $13/person

Register: 717-692-3699; nedsmithcenter.org


Mental Health Services
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Screenings & Testing
Primary Care
Alder Health Services
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We think about it every day.
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Primary Care Now Available
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Health Education
For more information call 1.800.867.1550
or visit www.ALDERHEALTH.org
Alder Health Services is dedicated to improving the health of individuals living with HIV/AIDS, members of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and transgender community and those struggling with addiction in South Central Pennsylvania. The organization provides residents of the community with: • HIV/AIDS Services and Prevention Programming • Primary Medical Care • Mental Health Counseling Services • STD Screening and Treatment • HIV Testing • Community Health Education Forums and Workshops
All HIV-related services are provided at no-cost to the participant. Primary medical care and mental health counseling services are available on a sliding fee scale. While many insurance plans are accepted, insurance is not necessary to access the services of Alder Health.

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www.noahsarkvetcenter.com

10 Things to consider about long-term care

by Megan Staley and LGBT Elder Initiative, Philadelphia

For LGBT older adults, the idea of entering the long-term care (LTC) system is complicated, confusing, and, sometimes, frightening.

In surveys, up to 80% say they fear discrimination and possible mistreatment in long-term care settings. Planning can make going into LTC less stressful and traumatic.

A long-term care facility provides care to people who are unable to care for themselves independently and includes nursing homes, personal care or convalescent homes, assisted living or skilled nursing facilities, or a continuing care community. Four million Americans reside in LTC facilities.

Here are 10 things to consider when thinking about long-term care:

1. Level of care needed

Generally speaking, there are 3 types of long-term care facilities: hospital-like, household-like, and combination. In a hospital-like setting, 24-hour medical care is provided as needed. Speech, physical, and occupational therapy are available. Specialty units may exist for patients suffering from strokes or dementia. A household-type facility allows for a little more independence but will provide trained nursing staff. This is often a more comfortable and private setting than the hospital-like model.

A combination setting provides extensive medical care and assistance in a setting of traditional comfort. Some facilities fall into this category because they have separate units for varying levels of care.

2. Location

Some people choose a facility that is close to their current home so they can stay close to their spouse or so as to not feel so uprooted. However, many choose to travel to a place that will put them closer to children, other relatives, or chosen kin. Climate, both social and physical, is another important factor. Would you like to be someplace warm and sunny? Do you want an urban setting? What is the cultural climate?

3. Cost

The median annual cost nationwide for a private room in a nursing home is $87,285 as of 2011. The median cost for a private room in a skilled nursing facility (SNF) is $3,185 per month. The highest rates for a private room are found in Alaska at $655 per day, while the lowest rates can be found in Oklahoma at $141 per day. Costs increase by about 4% annually across the nation. In assisted living facilities, the average national monthly base rate, as of 2011, was $3000 to $4000 depending on the services provided. An annual increase of 2% has been observed since 2009.

There are several ways to cover these costs - through Medicare, Medicaid, long-term care insurance, or, in some cases, a life's savings.

4. Access to resources

It is important that the LTC facility have a social worker on staff that you trust. That professional must be knowledgeable of the variety of agencies in existence for your benefit.

Some other issues that you should consider:

Is there a mail facility?

Perhaps there is a small shop within the building where you can purchase greeting cards or other small luxuries?

Is there a shuttle available for transportation outside of the facility?

All of these "small" issues add up to a better quality of life for you.

5. Religious/organizational affiliation

Just as with many hospitals, funds used to run a facility may come from a private organization like the order of the masons, or from a religious organization. Often, the benefactors of the facility create the mission statement and the policies that will affect you. Facilities like this tend to have a population that agrees with the worldview of its benefactors. It is also possible that money made in that facility will support the cause and beliefs of the organization that runs it.

6. Coming OUT / Staying OUT

The "silent generation" and the baby boomers dominate the populations of LTC facilities across the country. Surveys show that 50% of the members of each of these generations find homosexuality to be unacceptable. Many LGBT people, especially under these conditions, may decide that the closet is the safest and most comfortable place to be. However, LGBT and LGBT-friendly retirement communities do exist, and there are more in the planning stages. If you cannot find one near you, visit a facility and look for clues about the attitude of the staff and the residents. Check out this link, A Place for Mom, to find out more about these types of communities.

7. Cultural competence and sensitivity

Before you choose a facility, a visit is a must. If you decide to come out and/or stay out while in LTC, you should feel safe and comfortable with the staff and the other residents. Some facilities require staff to be trained in appropriate language and interactions so that they are sensitive to the unique needs of LGBT older adults. Ask if the staff has been trained in LGBT cultural competency and what the facility's policies and procedures are with regard to non-discrimination.

Bruce Steiner, left, helps feed his partner, Jim Anthony

8. Social life

One of the biggest complaints among seniors is feeling lonely. The chief benefit of an LTC facility, other than having professionals take care of you, is being surrounded by people who are in a similar situation. Look for common areas, such as lounges or recreation areas, how they are used, and by whom. Do these spaces feel inclusive? Are residents enjoying them? Ask to see a daily activities schedule. Another thing to ask about will be the visitation policy as well as policies regarding leaving the facility on outings with family and friends.

9. Reviews

With so many people entering LTC facilities, it is likely that you or a family member or a friend know someone who knows some things about at least one facility. The best knowledge is experience; never hesitate to ask around. There are also several websites that compare facilities and provide comments and testimonies. Follow this link to find a nursing home.

10. Knowing your rights

Always be your own advocate. LTC facilities are required by law to provide you with a written copy of your rights as a resident. You have the right to:

- Be free from abuse, including neglect and financial exploitation, from family, staff, and other residents;
- Privacy in all respects;
- Receive visitors;
- Participate in all social and/or religious activities or to choose not to;
- Be treated with respect and dignity;
- Participate in your care and/or delegate a proxy;
- Be informed of any changes to services, treatments, coverage, or room mates;
- Choose what to wear, your self-expression, your daily routine, and whether or not to stay in a room with another person; and
- File complaints free from fear.

Megan Staley has a biopsychology degree from Philadelphia University. She is an activities assistant with HCR Manor Care and a volunteer with the LGBT Elder Initiative, headquartered in Philadelphia. The program fosters and advocates for services, resources, and institutions that are competent, culturally sensitive, inclusive, and responsive to the needs of LGBT older adults in the Delaware Valley and beyond.

Molchany, Sims Introduce Pay Equity Legislation

As part of a larger effort to address the concerns of Pennsylvania women, state Reps. Erin Molchany, D-Allegheny, and Brian Sims, D-Phila., introduced a bill today (Jan. 6) that would clarify and update the legal standards for pay-equity lawsuits.

"The average woman earns 84 cents for every dollar a man makes. In the Pittsburgh region, the wage gap is closer to 73 cents per dollar," Molchany said. "While the entirety of the wage gap can't be blamed on discrimination, the fact that any of it could be attributed to someone's sex demands attention."

House Bill 1890 would update the conditions under which employers could pay different wages because of a factor other than sex. These factors would include specific, job-related attributes such as education, training and experience. The bill would also strengthen anti-retaliation protections for employees attempting to bring a pay-equity lawsuit against their employer and those who share information about their pay.

"Pay-equity laws have been around for 40 or more years," Sims said. "Clearly it's time to strengthen and update them to bring about real pay equity for the many working women in Pennsylvania who are still shortchanged."

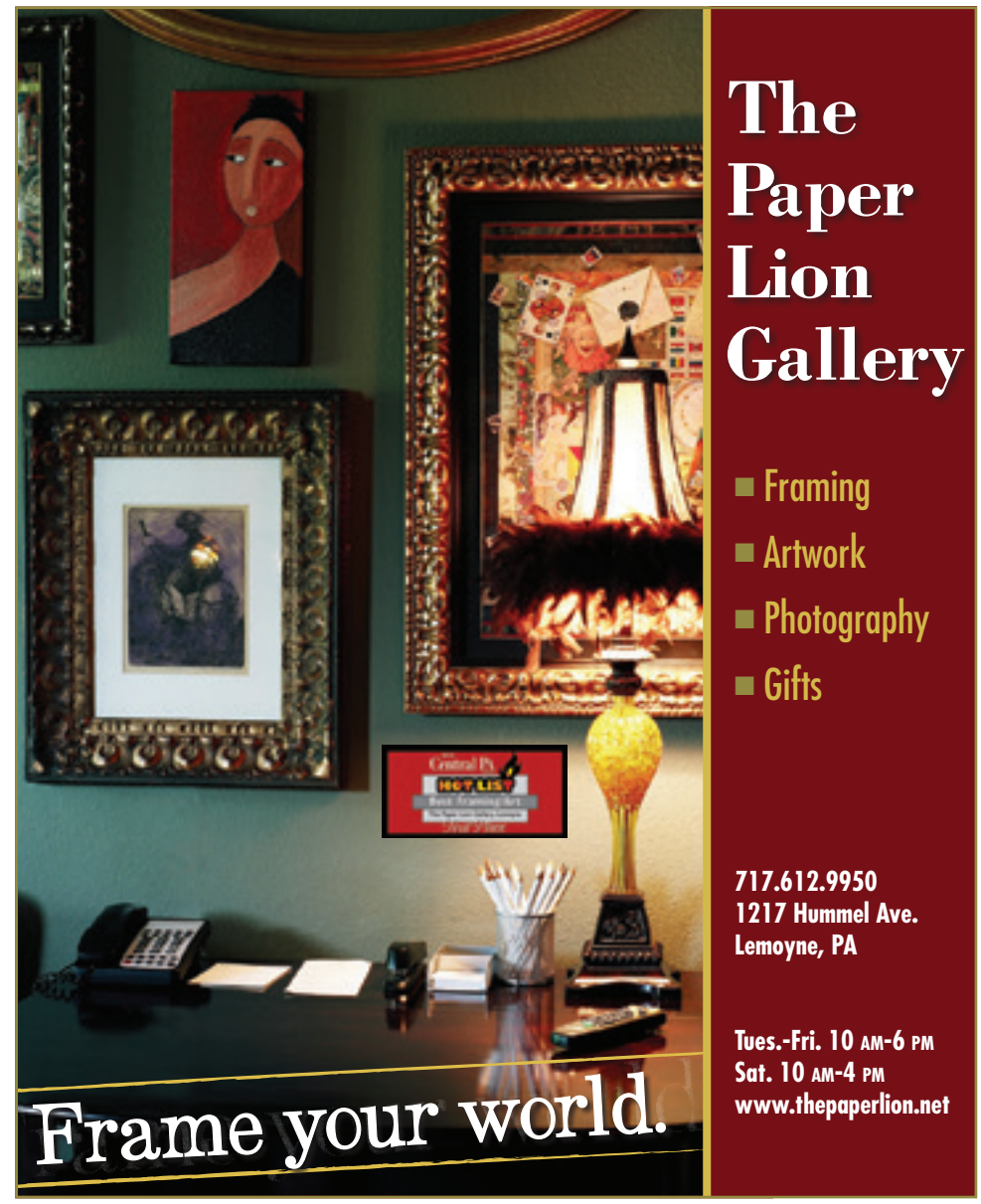
House Bill 1890, which was introduced with 45 bipartisan cosponsors, is a part of a larger package of bills supported by the Pennsylvania General Assembly's Women's Health Caucus.

"The agenda is not just about reproductive health," Molchany said. "It's about economic justice, support for families, and making Pennsylvania a national leader in supporting all of its citizens with the tools to succeed."

"We live in a country that guarantees each of us full equality under the law," Sims said. "Right now, in this country and in this state, more than half of our population is being insidiously discriminated against. This bill is long overdue."

This legislation is part of the Pennsylvania Agenda for Women's Health, which also includes workplace accommodations for pregnant women, sanitary conditions for nursing mothers, increased eligibility for breast and cervical cancer screenings, protections for domestic violence victims and a ban on intimate partner harassment (often referred to as "revenge porn").

The Women's Health Caucus is a bipartisan, bicameral group of legislators partnering with interest groups and advocacy organizations seeking to develop and implement legislation and social policy that protects and respects a woman's right to make private, personal medical decisions.



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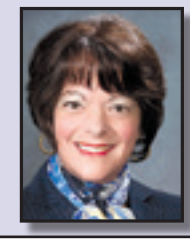

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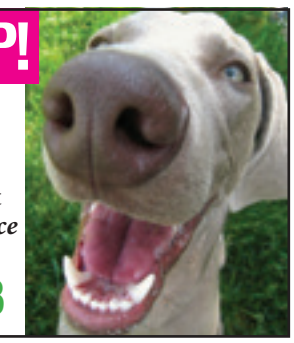

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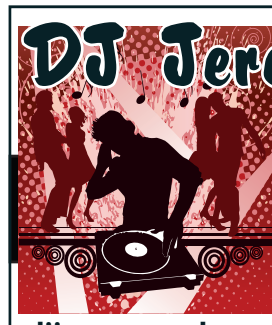

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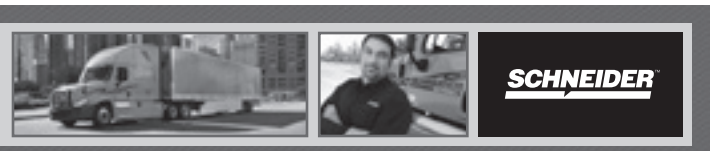

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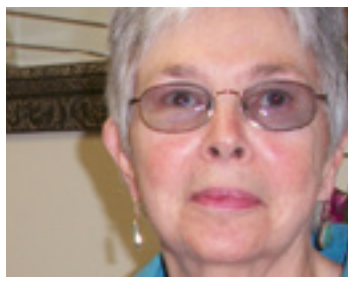
UPDATE: Court Rejects Inheritance Challenge, Appeal Expected

By Central Voice

Attorney Cindy Villanella, left, and her client Nancy Nixon, have heard from the Pennsylvania Department of Revenue Board of Appeals - the 15% Inheritance Tax stands as it relates to Nixon's claim.

"We were denied, as expected, and now I will be submitting my appeal to next level, the Orphans' Court," Nixon said in an email.

Since January, *Central Voice* has chronicled Nixon's legal challenge that same-sex couples, because they're marriage is not recognized in Pennsylvania, must pay a 15% Inheritance Tax when a partner dies. Nixon had petitioned the hearing board to view her relationship as a Common Law Marriage, a claim the review board did not hold.



Nancy Nixon

Nixon and her partner Jeanne Schartz, now deceased, lived together for 31-years as a couple, both publically and privately. They did not brag. Neither did they apologize. Anyone who knew them with even minor depth recognized them as a loving, committed couple. Still, under current rules, Nixon must pay the stiff Inheritance Tax.

Nixon is asking that the state recognize her 31-year relationship to Schwartz as a common-law marriage. The bottom line is that if recognized as a common-law marriage, Nixon would not have to pay $21,000 in taxes, a tax that does not apply to opposite sex marriages or relationships recognized as common-law.

Nixon is represented by Attorney Cindy Villanella in her challenge to Pennsylvania's tax rule which is the responsibility of the state Department of Revenue to execute.

"The suit seeks to have the state revoke the death tax of 15% imposed on the estate of her late partner, Jeanne Schwartz," Villanella explained. Currently, Pennsylvania defines marriage as between "one man and one woman," a measure signed into law in 1996 by then-Governor Tom Ridge, who now supports same-sex marriage. When the US Supreme Court was deciding on California's Proposition 8, Ridge signed an amicus curiae brief asking the court to support same-sex marriage.

community voice

Harrisburg Mayor Eric Papenfuse addresses 43 people who gathered at The Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Community Center March 31. They celebrated March Madness, a month-long drive to increase the center's dues-paying membership. At the close of the drive, 50 new members had joined the organization which employs two full-time professionals and offers community programs for thousands of people annually with an annual budget of $168,000. One-third of the funds supporting the center are derived from grants, one-third from benefits like FAB and other, smaller events, and one-third from annual membership dues and donations.

State Rep. Brian Sims (Phila.), right, and Equality PA executive director Ted Martin, left, addressed the TransCentralPA annual conference March 29. The event draws several hundred participants from across the country and worldwide. This year's welcome board had entries from Australia, Mexico, Copenhagen, Israel, Sweden, and Luxembourg.

❤ your pets

By Dr. Jose Venereo

Guard Against Heat Stroke

With the warm weather approaching, we enjoy taking our pets for a ride in a car or spend more time outdoors. At times we have to make a "quick" pit stop and we decide its okay to leave our furry friends in the car. Even for a few minutes, it is extremely dangerous to leave our pets unattended in a vehicle. Temperatures can reach very high levels inside a vehicle very quickly, even with partially open windows.

Even if it seems cool outside, if the sun is out the temperature in the car will increase rapidly. It is best to plan ahead. If you need to go shopping, make sure you shop in pet-friendly stores where you can take along your pet.

If by any chance you need to leave your pet unattended, leave the car running with the air conditioner on (This is not encouraged. This is worst case scenario.).

When you decide to take your pet outdoors, make sure you check the weather forecast for possible extreme heat. It is best to take them for a walk early morning or late evening. Not only can extreme heat be detrimental to them, but also hot walking surfaces can be damaging to their paws.

Exposure to extreme heat could lead to heat stroke. Signs of heat stroke may include respiratory distress, difficulty getting up or walking, disorientation, unresponsiveness. If any of these are noticed, your pet should be taken to the nearest veterinarian for immediate medical attention. Unattended heat stroke will lead to brain damage or death.

Heat stroke is very preventable. Taking proper precautions are key to preventing this serious condition. Some breeds are more predisposed to heat stroke than others. Make sure you understand and have knowledge of your pet's breed. Keep fresh water available at all times. Never leave your pet unattended. Enjoy the summer and have fun with your pet friend, just be aware of the weather.

Noah's Ark Veterinary Center, 6325 Chelton Ave., Harrisburg, PA 17112, (717)652-5923

Online Registration Favored by Two Former Secretaries

Common Cause/PA has hand delivered an open letter signed by 50 organizations and individuals to all members of the Pennsylvania House Representatives urging them to immediately pass SB-37, the Online Voter Registration bill.

Among the signatories are Pedro Cortes and Christopher Lewis, both former Secretaries of State for the Commonwealth under Governors Rendell and Casey, respectively. The secretary of state in Pennsylvania is responsible for administering the Bureau of Elections with the Department of State.

Seventeen states already have similar systems in place, and the PA Department of State has a system ready to launch as soon as the legislature provides official authorization.

Common Cause/PA Executive Director, Barry Kauffman, said "This is one of those common sense reforms that the legislature needs to get to the Governor before they go on break. It's supported by Republicans and Democrats, liberals and conservative, voters and election officials. This is a holiday gift the voters will be grateful for."

The letter highlights four reasons the organization claims Pennsylvania ought to adopt online voter registration: reduced costs for registering voters, enhanced convenience for voters, improved speed and accuracy for updating voter registration rolls, and strengthened security with fewer opportunities for abuse.

A diverse and bipartisan coalition of organizations and issue experts has endorsed the Open Letter to the legislature, including the Commonwealth Foundation, the Urban League of Philadelphia, the PA Business Council, and the ACLU of PA.

Info: www.CallToAction4PA.org

Insurance *continued from page one*

that Miller and Bechdel were married in July, 2012 in Washington, D.C. complicated their search.

Bechdel was told consecutively by two call center Highmark representatives that the insurance company could not provide the requested coverage because Pennsylvania did not allow or recognize same-sex marriages from other states or the District of Columbia. But once his dilemma was brought to Highmark's attention, a solution was swiftly put into motion.

On March 8, the date of the *Central Voice* interview with Bechdel and Miller, they were expecting the coverage they sought within weeks. In fact, Bechdel said in an email that within days of the interview the issue was resolved: "The next day or a couple of days later, we received his (Miller's) new card putting him and me on the same policy. So, everything seems to have worked out."

Deborah Rice-Johnson, president of Highmark Health Services Plans, called Bechdel. "She sincerely apologized over the confusion," he shared.

Along the way, Chris LaBonte, who had recently offered a same-sex health care coverage talk offered by the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce confirmed for Bechdel that when using the Federal marketplace for coverage that prohibitions against same-sex marriage did not apply.

The same day of Bechdel and Miller's interview, March 8, local Highmark representative Lori Robinson, Highmark Sr. Community Affairs Specialist, announced at the annual dinner of the Central Pennsylvania Chamber of Commerce that the insurance company "is in the process of filing for new benefits packages to accommodate same sex couples" in the products offered on the Federal health care web site. New products have been submitted to the Pennsylvania Insurance Department and Centers for Medicare and Medicaid Services to obtain the necessary approvals. The company has requested an expedited review and anticipate products as early as this spring.

In the mix of communication around their dilemma, Miller had sent an email to the chamber that prompted the organization to connect Miller and Robinson. Highmark is a chamber corporate sponsor. Chamber president Deb McClain explained in a newsletter to members the business group had "reached out to" Robinson.

Longstanding support

When asked about Highmark's support of the LGBT community, Brad Martin, Central Pennsylvania Pride Festival president said, "We've had a great relationship with Highmark for several years. Their commitment to the LGBT community has been strong. I'm sure they'll follow through with this commitment."

Louie Marven, executive director of LGBT Center of Central Pennsylvania reports that Highmark has sponsored FAB, the organization's annual gala, in 2011, 2012, and 2013. "They also sponsored Lancaster Pride in 2013," he said.

"We've also received other support via corporate sponsorship of programs, as well as our participation in the Highmark Walk for a Healthy Community in 2013 and again this year on May 17," Marven said. The center, he adds, has also received matching donations when Highmark employees made donations to the center through the Employee Gift Matching Program.

Alder Health Services, Harrisburg and Lancaster, has also received financial assistance from Highmark. "We've received $25,000 this year and in 2013, plus donations in other years to help with our mission in various ways," former AHS CEO Phil Goropolous said.

Look now?

Through what he now sees as a lot of confusion, rather than a nefarious plot to deny same-sex couples health care coverage, Bechdel says he thinks what fueled the mix up is that the Affordable Healthcare Act went into effect before the U.S. Supreme Court decided that same-sex marriage was legal on a Federal level. "It's difficult to have two such momentous events, one after the other, occur without all sorts of things that need to be fixed," Bechdel says.

When the Federal health care marketplace went into effect Jan. 1, 2014, it reflected the June 26, 2013 U.S. Supreme Court decision declaring the Federal ban on same-sex marriage unconstitutional. "That's a lot to coordinate and get right in every detail," Bechdel reflects.

Regarding the state of same-sex marriage in Pennsylvania - the issue that started Bechdel's efforts, Miller says, "I expect we'll have same-sex marriage in Pennsylvania by the end of the year." Opposing individuals and organizations "have no compelling arguments that the government has a legitimate interest in controlling" who adults choose to marry, Miller says.

LGBT Support:

In 2010, Highmark sponsor the Central Pennsylvania Pride Festival's Unity Parade with a $5,000 contribution.

In 2011, Highmark was official sponsor of the Central Pennsylvania Pride Festival, making a $10,000 contribution.

In 2012, Highmark's Tija R. Hilton-Phillips, Esq. was selected as the Unity Parade's Grand Marshall. They made a contribution of $10,000 that year.

In 2013, Highmark made a $6,000 contribution to the festival.

The organization is a corporate sponsor of the Central Pennsylvania Gay and Lesbian Chamber of Commerce.

Highmark is an advertiser in Central Voice and the Official Pride Guide.

Pride Events *continued from page one*

Sun., June 29
Have a gay ole' time with friends and be a part of the biggest Pride Celebration in the world on the Pride Festival of Central PA NYC Pride Bus Trip. Departs Harrisburg 6:30 a.m., arrives 9:30 a.m.; departs NYC 8 p.m., arrives 11 p.m. Tickets are $50 before May 1, $55 after. VIP Tickets $70 before May 1, $75 after, includes cocktails, refreshments, snacks, gift bag.
Ticket information can be found at: http://hbgprideeventsregistration.webs.com/nyc-pride-bus-registration
Info: Andrew Campbell, 717-460-0993

PRIDE WEEK EVENTS

Mon., July 21
Pride Forum
Location: Midtown Scholar Bookstore
1302 North Third Street, Harrisburg
Details TBA. Forum by Capital Region Stonewall Democrats
Time: 6-7 p.m.
Cost: Free

Tues., July 22
Dine OUT - Harrisburg
Location: Isaac's
421 Friendship Road, Harrisburg, PA 17111
(Behind Bass Pro Shops on Paxton Street)
Bring your friends and family to enjoy great food and great company while supporting Central PA Pride. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the cost of your meal will go directly to support the Pride Parade & Festival.
Time: 5-9 p.m.

Thurs., July 24
Event TBA
Location: LGBT Center
1306 N. Third Street, Harrisburg
Time: 6-8 p.m.
Cost: Free

Fri., July 25
Voices United Concert
Location: Market Square Presbyterian
20 S. Second Street, Harrisburg
Children 12 and under free
"A Choral Celebration of Pride" with Central PA Womyn's Chorus, MCC of the Spirit Choir, Harrisburg Men's Chorus
Time: 8 p.m.
Cost: $15, available at door or online, www.harrisburgmenschorus.org

Pre-Pride Dance Party
Location: Stallions Nightclub
DJ Fizzy will be spinning the hottest Old school and New school dance, Hip Hop, R&B, and Baltimore Club. $50 CASH at RANDOM to someone dancing!
Time: 10 p.m.
Cost: No Cover

Sat., July 26
Parade, 11 a.m.
Pride Festival of Central PA
Location: Riverfront Park - Front Street, Harrisburg
Enjoy food, vendors, family zone with carnival games, local Drag Queens performances, live music all day long. Headliner is Blake Lewis. Steel Kitty also performs. Main Stage - Take 147.
Time: 11 a.m. - 6 p.m.
Cost: $8 per person
Children 12 and under free

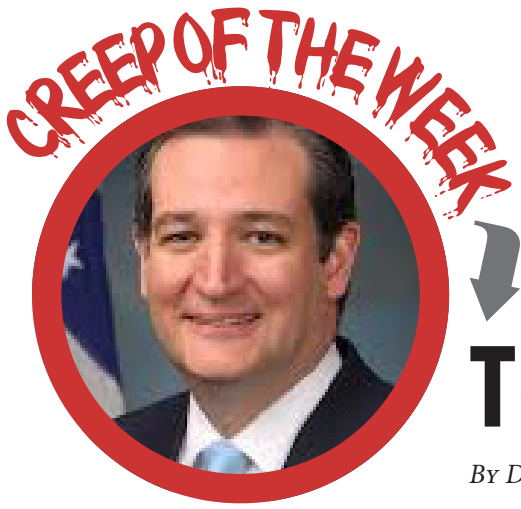
PSEC Post-Pride Karaoke Night
Location: LGBT Center
1306 N. Third Street, Harrisburg
Time: 6-10 p.m.
Cost: FREE for ALL Ages
PA Student Equality Coalition hosts Post-Pride Karaoke Night, free, all ages social at the LGBT Center. Meet others in your community. Food and beverages provided.

Pride After-Party
Location: Stallions Nightclub
Time: 8 p.m. - ???
Cost: TBA

Sun., July 27
Stonewall Democrats
10 a.m
Hope Fest
2p.m.
Spirits United Interfaith Service
Location: MCC of the Spirit
2973 Jefferson Street, Harrisburg 17110
Time: 7 p.m.
Spirits United Interfaith Service provides diverse spiritual and religious expression by and for the LGBT community, friends and allies.
Cost: Free

The Pride Festival of Central PA is a project of The Foundation for Enhancing Communities (TFEC), which acts as fiscal sponsor.

Info: www.centralpapridefestival.com



Ted Cruz

By D'Anne Witkowski

America is a tough place for sensitive men. Crying is forbidden unless a guy wants to be seen as some kind of fag. But there are a few select places where guys can get a pass if they shed a few tears. Weddings, for example. Everybody cries at weddings: men, women, babies (although the babies usually cry because, well, that's what babies do and they'd do it anywhere regardless of whether or not everlasting love and commitment were being promised between two people. Still).

Senator Ted Cruz (R-Texas) is no exception. He's not afraid to declare publically that he "weeps" at weddings. And that would be totally commendable if those were happy tears, but the weeping Cruz is copping to is a result of his sadness that gay couples are finally starting to get treated like equals in this country.

In a Feb. 13 interview with professional homophobe Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council, Cruz expressed his dismay that marriage equality has been winning over and over again in the courts.

"Our heart weeps for the damage to traditional marriage that has been done," he told Perkins.

First I'd like to make note of Cruz's use of "our heart," rather than "our hearts" or even "my heart." It's a subtle slip, but it allows a glimpse into the little known fact that Tea Partiers like Cruz share one heart between them. After all, one doesn't have to be well-versed in Tea Party policies to see that their ideology really requires no heart at all.

Secondly, the fact that Cruz is crying over the "damage" same-sex couples have done to the institution of marriage, damage that exists only in Cruz's anti-gay fantasies, is indicative of the fact that Cruz not only lacks a heart, but a brain as well.

Cruz introduced the State Marriage Defense Act Feb. 13, which seeks to invalidate the federal recognition of same-sex marriages if those couples dare cross state lines into a state that bans their unions.

Cruz then goes on to regale Perkins with anti-marriage equality talking points.

"You and I both know that the best environment for a child to be raised in is a loving home with a mother and father and a strong marriage that is the foundation for that family, for the community, for the church," Cruz says.

And he's right, to a point. The best environment for children is, in deed, a loving home with two parents. But no credible research has shown that those parents have to be of the opposite sex or that the children of same-sex parents are harmed in any way.

Additionally, I agree with Cruz that strong marriages play an important foundational role in society. But again, marriage doesn't depend on one penis and one vagina for strength.

"We're seeing that marriage is under attack," Cruz continues. "We need to stand up, I believe, and defend traditional marriage and especially do everything we can to prevent the federal government from forcing a different definition of marriage that's contrary to the views of the citizens of each state."

And Cruz has just the plan to keep those dastardly homos from getting their cooties all over marriage. On the day before Valentine's Day for fucksake, Cruz introduced the State Marriage Defense Act, which seeks to invalidate the federal recognition of same-sex marriages if those couples dare cross state lines into a state that bans their unions.

For example, my wife and I live in Michigan where our marriage is not recognized by the state. But since we were legally married in California, our marriage is recognized by the federal government regardless of where we live. Cruz wants to strip federal recognition of our marriage, essentially unmarrying us simply because our marriage makes him weep.

As my Grandma used to say, "Quit crying or I'll give you something to cry about." And, thankfully, marriage equality is winning this battle, so I don't expect him to stop crying any time soon.

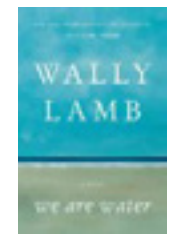
BOOK REVIEWS | DAUPHIN COUNTY LIBRARY

By Deborah Battisti, Dauphin County Library

Enjoy these new titles: a rough, engaging memoir, an urban fiction romantic triangle, a sophisticated family drama and a charming pulp piece about lesbians in the 1960's. We've got all kinds of stories about gay life and love at the Dauphin County Library System.

Harley Loco: Hard Living, Hair and Post-Punk from the Middle East to the Lower East Side
by Raya Elias
Raya Elias fled from Syria to Detroit with her family in 1967. She then fled Detroit as a teenager who didn't fit in, and ended up in New York during the 80's and 90's, a city she evokes perfectly, complete with sour odors and pain. In this compulsively page-turning memoir of her search for herself, Elias takes us on a tour of her hell as she sells drugs, does drugs, falls in and out of love with several women, becomes an award-winning hair stylist, performs with punk when she can, goes to jail, and eventually hits bottom and goes straight. Haunting and mesmerizing, Elias's story captures powerfully the vulnerability of being an outsider and the deep yearnings to be a part of something, to fit in. (Publishers Weekly 12/24/12)

May the Best Man Win
by M.T. Pope
They say a good man is hard to find. Kardell Spence and Lewis Turner know this all too well. Neither is lucky in love, and now they are both vying for the affections of their new advertising client, Mateo.



We are Water
by Wally Lamb
Anna Oh, a middle-age wife, mother and artist, divorces her husband after 27 years of marriage to marry Viveca, the Manhattan art dealer who orchestrated her professional success. The story of Anna, her family and lover is told through alternating voices in an "emotionally involving" novel that is "clear and sweetly flowing." (Library Journal 9/15/13)

Maxie Mainwaring, Lesbian Dilettante
by Monica Nolan
In this clever and campy send-up of 1960s pulp, Nolan) tells the tale of one Maxie Mainwaring, a Bay City heiress whose wealthy family cuts off her allowance after she's caught kissing Elaine Ellman in the bathroom at the 1964 Daughters of the American Pioneers Spring Tea. In the ensuing fallout, the feckless heroine who has never had to support herself, is forced to seek employment and gets caught up in a Scandinavian mob scheme, finds her mother in a compromising position, falls for an attractive butch named Lon, and dodges a murder attempt, charming the pants off everyone in this original and engaging romp. (Publishers Weekly 5/27/13)

Visit dcls.org and search the catalog for these and other great reads.

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Political Update *continued from page 3*

Rhode Island House Speaker Resigns Amid Investigation

Gordon D. Fox, 52, gay Democratic speaker of the Rhode Island House of Representatives, has resigned his leadership post amid an investigation the details of which are scant at press time. Fox resigned a day after federal and state law enforcement authorities raided his office and home. Although he resigned as Speaker, Fox said he will complete the remaining two years of his term as a representative.

Federal and state law enforcement agents raided Mr. Fox's office at the State House and his home in East Providence, R.I. but did not disclose the reason for the raids. Mr. Fox, too, has been silent on the raids. Agents from the F.B.I., the Internal Revenue Service, the United States attorney's office and the state police conducted the searches. Fox was first elected to the state House of Representatives in 1992 and had been speaker since February 2010. Fox was instrumental in pushing through the legislation last May that legalized same-sex marriage in Rhode Island.

Activist to UN: LGBT People Face 'brutal' Violence

A St. Lucian LGBT rights advocate, Kenita Placide of United and Strong, told a UN commission lesbians, bisexuals and transgender people around the world face "brutal physical and psychological violence"

"Globally, lesbians, bisexuals, transgender people and others with diverse sexual orientations and gender identities face brutal physical and psychological violence," said Placide in a statement she read on behalf of 76 organizations from 28 countries during a UN Commission on the Status of Women. "We are subjected to harassment, assault and discrimination in the global North and South alike." St. Lucia is among the more than 70 countries in which homosexuality remains criminalized.

Higher Minimum Wage?

Pennsylvania State Senators Daylin Leach (D-Montgomery) and Mike Stack (D-Philadelphia) have introduced a bill that would raise the minimum wage to $12 per hour and index future increases to inflation. The measure also makes it illegal to pay workers who receive tips as compensation less than minimum wage. For example, tip earners are paid a minimum of $2.83 an hour with tips added to that figure, allowing employers to circumvent paying the current minimum wage of $7.25. The state's "tip" formula has not changed in 23 years. The PA Chamber of Business and Industry opposes the measure. Leach is running for Congress. Stack is running for Lieutenant Governor.

Pope's Tone Softens while Vatican Fights Rights

The battleground is the United Nations. "Today, the nature of the family is confused by so many…. it is scandalous," the Holy See's representative to the UN said recently, reports BuzzFeed's J. Lester Feder. Pope Francis's softening tone on LGBT issues does not appear to have been matched by a meaningful shift in policy in the realm in international diplomacy. The Vatican is a "permanent observer" with the almost all the same right that states have to participate in debates and closed negotiations. (It is one of only two entities with this status; the other is Palestine.) The religious organization has held a hard line in fighting to preserve a narrow definition of the word "family" in international law. "I cannot see a change [in Holy See diplomacy] that has trickled down" since Francis became pope, said one diplomat from a country that supports LGBT rights who asked to speak anonymously to discuss closed negotiations. March 19, the Holy See co-sponsored a public event at the UN headquarters in New York with Belarus, Qatar, Indonesia, and the Arizona-based group Family Watch International, which describes its mission as promoting "the family based on marriage between a man and a woman as the societal unit that provides the best outcome for men, women and children."

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THINKING OUT LOUD:

The End of the Slippery Slope

Why same-sex marriage won't lead the way to goat weddings and polygamy

By Abby Dees

I've heard some variation of this kind of argument more times than I can count: "If we let gays marry, next we'll have to let people marry goats! Or, "If we can't legislate morality, what's to stop people from legalizing polygamy or marrying children?" These are what lawyers call "slippery slope" arguments, the idea being that once you've started going down the hill, there's nothing to keep you from pretty much careening all the way to the bottom.

Slippery slope arguments are a mainstay of conservative commentators who object to same-sex marriage, and I can see why. They appeal in a common-sense kind of way. It's important for a civil society to have clear lines between things that are right and wrong so we all know what to expect each day. The slippery slope suggests that well intended policies could have unintended consequences that will surely send us into chaos.

You might have noticed, however, that while these comments are all over the place in the media, they're pretty much non-existent in LGBT court cases. That's because in real life there is no slippery slope.

In law school I learned how to use the slippery slope argument to make my position sound stronger than it really was. It's actually more of a volley into the opponent's court than a killer shot; it buys a little time and gets the other side on the defensive.

Allow me to return the volley and explain why same-sex marriage won't put us on a slippery slope to ruin. In short, it's because the law is in the hands of human beings, not robots, who will, with any luck, put the brakes on when it's correct to do so. And that choice will always be dependent on more than one simple precedent – such as same-sex marriage – but rather, a complex weighing of the multitude of competing rights and duties we all have.

Back in 1878 the Supreme Court outlawed polygamy based on the idea that religious belief can't trump the needs of an ordered democracy. We still have freedom of religion, but it never exists in a vacuum.

Now let's talk about goat marriage. No matter what the courts say about same-sex marriage, there is at least one very good reason why we will never see man/goat marriages down at the courthouse: goats can't consent. Each of us has the right to marry, sure, but inherent to modern legal marriage is _ mutual _ consent. Sorry, goat-lovers.

Which is also why states restrict marriage to minors. You'll probably agree that what makes the image of someone marrying a minor distasteful (at best) to most of us is that minors are likely not mature or empowered enough as individuals to fully and freely consent to such an important agreement. In this case, the law respects the right of the minor to not be coerced or exploited by someone in a more powerful position over the right of the adult to marry, or even the minor's right to choose.

The more compelling version of the slippery slope argument is whether we can legislate morality. Same-sex marriage opponents believe that same-sex marriage portends the end of moral considerations in our laws. But we legislate morality all the time. Think about strip joints near schools or banning porn on broadcast TV.

Again, it's a question of weighing the rights involved. Is it your right not to have the evening news go totally hardcore, or the network's right to broadcast what they want? The moral foundation of our laws will continue to be factored into the equation as long as we have a system of rights. Sometimes that morality will be deemed compelling enough to compel legislation; sometimes it won't.

As for same-sex marriage, where we've won it, the courts have decided that one group's moral views (a minority of people now, for the record) is not sufficient to stop another group from entering into a lawful contract of marriage, as consenting adults. More specifically, and with all due respect to those who disagree, where society goes next is not a foregone conclusion. Rather than wildly sliding down, I'd say we're still climbing, slowly, up.

Abby is a civil rights attorney-turned-author who has been in the LGBT rights trenches for 25-plus years.

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